

ST. DUNSTAN BOY SCOUTS



WARREN L. ELDRED



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ST. DUNSTAN BOY SCOUTS

**BOOKS BY
WARREN L. ELDRED**

Illustrated by Arthur O. Scott

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“JACK RADCLIFF, FIRST-CLASS SCOUT AND PATROL LEADER OF THE BUFFALOES.”—Page 138.

ST. DUNSTAN SERIES

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BY

WARREN L. ELDRED

ILLUSTRATED BY ARTHUR O. SCOTT



BOSTON

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ST. DUNSTAN BOY SCOUTS



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St. Dunstan Boy Scouts

CHAPTER I

COOKIES AND CONSEQUENCES

“**B**E prepared!” Harold Chester pronounced the words with solemn impressiveness as he opened the door of “Number 6, June,” where his four most intimate friends were awaiting him. At St. Dunstan’s, Junior Hall was known as “June,” while Senior Hall was known as “Seen.”

“Prepared for what?” Curtis Wilson inquired curiously.

“Anything — everything,” was the mysterious answer. “One never can tell where one’s duty will lead one; can one?”

“What under the sun is one trying to tell one?” Luther Hamilton asked, in comic imitation of Harold’s tone. As he spoke, he moved into a corner of the broad, low window-seat, and threw a pillow across to the opposite end. Harold accepted the unspoken invitation, and settled himself comfortably.

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"I've been reading a lot lately about the Boy Scouts," he commenced to explain. "I guess you fellows know what they are. Well, I want to be a scout."

Clinton Austin had heard of an ancient hymn, entitled, "I Want to be an Angel," so he commenced to sing:

"I want to be a Boy Scout,
And with the Boy Scouts stand.
A badge upon my coat-sleeve,
A staff clutched in my hand."

Then the others descended in force upon him, and the melody ceased abruptly.

"Go ahead, Hal," Wally de Wrigglesby remarked encouragingly. "We won't stop you. In fact, you'll find us along the side-lines, rooting for you."

"It's no fun to be a scout all by yourself," Harold protested. "I want you fellows to be scouts, too. That's what I'm aiming at, and I did hope you'd be bright enough to see it for yourselves."

"Toot-toot! Oh, listen to the mocking-bird," Luther exclaimed. "I suppose Hal wants to turn us each into a fellow like Sure-eyed Sam."

"Who's Sure-eyed Sam?"

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Luther's eyes opened wide in pretended amazement. "I thought you had read all the classics," he replied. "Maybe you never heard of 'Sure-eyed Sam, or the Scout's Revenge.' It's by — let's see, was it J. Fenimore Cooper or Washington Irving who wrote it?"

"Go down and look in the library catalogue, Lute," Curtis suggested helpfully. "That'll tell you, most likely."

"Oh, but it isn't in the school library," Luther declared. "That was one of the books which I read in the days of my childhood"—here the others hooted derisively—"and ever since that time, I've just longed to be a scout, and to ride forth on my black broncho to massacre the redskins."

"Huh! Well, Boy Scouts don't massacre Indians, Mr. Luther Hamilton," Harold muttered in disgust, "so you needn't think you'll be anything like your old friend Sure-eyed Sam if you become a scout. Besides, little boys shouldn't read such stuff. We'll teach you better when we get our patrol started."

"I'm willing to be taught," Luther responded with a merry laugh. "Anything to put a little ginger into life here. Ever since the Christmas holidays, it's been so quiet that the still, small voice of conscience makes a noise like a factory whistle."

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“What’ll we call our patrol?” the restless organizer asked. Harold was determined to get his friends fairly aroused to the possibilities and opportunities of scout life, knowing that their enthusiasm, once kindled, would equal his own.

“We want something active,” Wally suggested. “Why not call it Police Patrol?”

“Fine! Glorious!” Curtis assented. “Our call could be, ‘Ding-ding,’ just like the bell on a police patrol.”

Clinton brought the matter back to serious consideration by observing, “I believe it would be a fine thing for us to get the Boy Scout movement started here, Hal. Most likely, other fellows will want to be scouts, too, when they find out what fun we are having. Before long, we may have a St. Dunstan Troop, with several patrols. This crowd is just the one to start such a thing.”

Luther nodded. “It’s sure to appeal to the fellows,” he declared. “If we work hard, and get a good, live patrol in action, they’ll be struggling for the great privilege of entering the ranks.”

“Those in favor of becoming scouts, say ‘Aye.’ Contrary minded, ‘No.’ It is so voted—unanimously and very enthusiastically,” Harold said sud-

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denly, announcing the result before any one had a chance to speak. "Come on over and see if Doctor Prune will let us organize a patrol. We can settle on a name by-and-by."

Doctor Prune was the Headmaster of St. Dunstan's School, where these prospective scouts were enrolled as students. When any new organization was proposed, it was necessary to secure his permission before the plans could be put into operation.

"I'm going to stop downstairs, on the way out," Curtis announced. "My sense of smell tells me that Mrs. Arland is having some ginger cookies baked, and I think my interior decorations would be improved by the addition of a few."

"Um-m-m! Get one for me," Harold begged. "You can smile more persuasively than I can."

Mrs. Arland was the Matron of St. Dunstan's, and many a boy, far off from his mother, had blessed the day when he made the acquaintance of this gentlemanly, sweet-spirited friend. Her rooms were close to the entrance of Junior Hall, and the boys halted outside the door of her sitting-room, while Curtis pressed the electric bell.

In a moment, Mrs. Arland was smiling a greeting into the faces of these boys who had proven such good

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friends in a time of need (as readers of "The Crimson Ramblers" will recall).

"Good afternoon, Mrs. Arland!" Curtis began, genially. "We were just reading an article in the paper, and it claimed that ginger cookies, taken before studying, would stimulate — wasn't that the word, Hal — would stimulate brain work."

Harold nodded solemnly. "Stimulate or simulate," he responded. "Maybe it said 'would simulate brain work,' Curt."

Mrs. Arland's smile expressed amusement, as she said, "I should like to see that paper, Curtis."

"Yes'm. I'll get it when I go upstairs," Curtis promised. "I — er — I have the paper, only I haven't written out the article we were talking about. It won't take but a minute, though, Mrs. Arland, and maybe I could finish it more quickly if I had a cookie to sort of inspire me. We thought we'd like to experiment and see whether they really would help us to study. We smelled some coming downstairs."

"What? You smelled ginger cookies coming downstairs?" Mrs. Arland asked in pretended astonishment. "Where are they? Have they reached the foot of the stairway yet? Really, I should like to see a ginger cookie coming downstairs."

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"That's one on you, Curt," laughed Wally. "We were coming downstairs when we smelled the cookies in the kitchen, Mrs. Arland. It was too much for hungry mortals to resist."

"I'm so sorry," was the calm answer, "but you boys are ninth among the applicants for cookies. Eight others have been here during the last hour, and I've had to refuse them all. You will have supper at six, and then you may experiment to your hearts' content. In the meantime, wouldn't it be a comfort for you to read an article which I clipped from a paper yesterday? It tells of the harmful effects of eating between meals."

Harold sighed mournfully. "The man who wrote that article probably had dyspepsia and hated the sight of food," he suggested. "Never mind! In an hour, it will be all the same to me. Starvation will have me in its grip."

"Oh, no! You won't starve, Harold," Mrs. Arland assured him. "If you boys are going out, I wish you would send Rob in here. It is probable that you will find him somewhere on the campus. He went down to the grocery store for me this afternoon, and hasn't returned."

"We will, Mrs. Arland," Luther promised. Then

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he added with a little laugh, "We're going to join the Boy Scouts, if Doctor Prune will let us, so we may as well begin our scouting by getting on Rob's trail. Did he wear anything special that would leave a peculiar mark, so that it would be easy to follow him?"

"Why, yes," Mrs. Arland replied after a little thought. "One of his rubbers — the left one — was patched on the outer edge of the sole."

"Hurray! We have a clue!" Luther cried eagerly.

"Come on, my fellow-scouts! Us for the trackless wilds!"

They parted from Mrs. Arland with assurances of the things they would do to the ginger cookies when an opportunity to attack them was afforded, then hurried outside onto the snow-covered campus. The early twilight of a January day had spread a shadowy covering over the landscape, making it difficult to distinguish one footprint from others which ploughed through the snow in many directions.

"I see where we can use a lantern as a part of our equipment," Harold suggested. "If we have to follow many trails after dark, we'll need one."

"Every fellow in the school seems to have tramped over the snow in front of this hospitable entrance," Luther grunted. "Still, Mrs. Arland said that Bob

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had gone down to the grocery store for her, so I suppose we might start there, and trail him back."

"Oh, yes! We might!" Clinton agreed scornfully. "That would be quite easy if Dunstanburg had only one grocery store. I believe there are more than a dozen. Which one did Bob go to?"

"Probably the one with the big green wagon, where they give double trading stamps on Mondays," Harold ventured. "That's where the school trades. I know where it is, and we have plenty of time to get down there and back before supper-time. This way, children! Follow the trusty guide."

"There's Paul Eaton!" Wally announced, as they moved toward the gate. "O you Paul! Seen anything of Bob Arland?"

Paul shook his head and drew nearer to the group as he replied, "No, not since last night. Are you looking for him?"

"Yes. His mother asked us to send him home if we found him throwing snowballs at himself anywhere around the country. She sent him down to the grocery store for a yeast cake, because Bob's fond of cake, and she thought maybe if he ate one at night it would help him to rise quickly in the morning."

"It might," Paul agreed, as he joined the others

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and moved through the school gateway with them. "Still, I'd rather be old-fashioned, and use an alarm-clock."

"Don't you want to be a scout, Paul?" Harold asked suddenly.

"A *what?*"

"A scout! A Boy Scout! A loyal Britisher like you ought to know all about 'em."

"Oh — that kind! I know! We have a good many patrols in Canada. Yes, I'd like to be a scout. Are you going to start the thing going here at St. Dunstan's?"

"I suggested it to the children, thinking it might amuse them," Harold replied with a patronizing air that caused Curtis to pick up a handful of snow for disciplinary purposes. "They are very enthusiastic, bless their little hearts, so it only remains for us to get Doctor Prune's blessing, and then —"

Just then, two snowballs from the "children" interrupted Harold's description, and he stopped abruptly in order to defend himself. It was some time before the dove of peace settled upon the snowy battlefield, but it did finally, and then the discussion was renewed.

"Eight fellows can form a patrol," Harold re-

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marked. "Shall we let in Hollister and Fullerton? We have six here."

"I think it would be a good idea," Wally responded quietly. "Isn't it a part of the Scout Law to be a friend to those who need it?"

"Yes, and to do a kind deed every day."

"Well, those two fellows seem to like our friendship, and, judging from the things that happened last term, we can help them by keeping up our interest in them. I think we ought to have a good strong patrol with eight fellows like those we've picked out."

"So say we all of us!" Clinton exclaimed, and the others nodded a cordial endorsement of this sentiment.

"There's the grocery store over on the corner," Curtis announced, a little later. "Shall we all invade its peace, or shall we send a delegate to ask about Bob?"

"Let's all go," Wally proposed. "I've discovered unexpected fortune in the shape of a nickel that I didn't realize was in my possession. I'll buy half a pound of crackers to keep us from starving until we get a chance at Mrs. Arland's cookies."

A united whoop of joy attracted the attention of passing natives, and Harold sprang to Wally's side,

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exclaiming impulsively, "Wally, you know I've always been your friend. I'd share my last crust with you if you were starving."

"Yes, I know you would, Hal," was the laughing reply, "and so I'll share my last cracker with you when I come to it. What kind of crackers do you get the most of for five cents?"

While the others offered a variety of suggestions, they all passed inside the store in search of information and crackers.

They learned that Robert Arland had been in during the afternoon. He had left an order for a long list of things needed at the school, and had carried one or two packages back with him. The clerk was sure that Rob had left the store fully an hour before the boys entered it.

Wally bought his crackers, and then they walked outside the store, looking carefully for the print of a rubber with a patch on the outer edge of the sole.

"No use," Curtis sighed. "The snow's all tramped down. Most likely, Bob's back at school by this time."

"I wonder what kept him," Luther ventured, nibbling thoughtfully at a cracker. "It isn't a bit like

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Bob to get sidetracked this way when he has work to do."

"We might have called up Mrs. Arland from the grocery store," Wally reminded them. "I didn't think of that. She could have told us whether Bob has come back. If he isn't home by this time, I'm afraid something has happened to him."

"It'll make us late for supper if we go back now," Curtis objected. "We can get out to the school in fifteen minutes, you know, and Bob surely will be there then, unless — well, unless something serious is keeping him."

Now they were approaching the place where the railroad wound through the country on its way northward from the Dunstanburg station. A warning whistle shrieked, the glare of a locomotive headlight shone through the darkness, and a long train of empty freight cars rolled into view.

The train moved more slowly as it approached the road, coming at length to an abrupt, jolting stop. Lanterns flashed signals back and forth. The engine panted and snorted noisily, giving forth shrill shrieks at intervals. Then the train moved backward a few yards, and again came to a full stop.

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"They're going to back on to that long siding to let the 6:22 go past," Paul Eaton remarked. "I wonder how much longer they expect to block this road."

"Well, we can't afford to wait for these bloomin' cars to get out of the way," Luther declared in a decided tone. "That would make us late for supper. Come on across! We can crawl under, climb over, or go around. You can pay your money and take your choice. Which shall it be?"

"It will be more dignified to go around," Clinton replied. "Also safer. It won't take us more than a hundred yards out of our way. Forward, brave scouts!" and he started to make a *détour* around the forward end of the long train, the others following close behind him.

The snow was banked on either side of the tracks, and the ground between was covered with a recent snowfall which had not been cleared away, except where the wind had swept it from the earth. On this mass of whiteness, the brilliant glare of the powerful headlight on the locomotive fell with dazzling power.

Harold turned away his face, in order to shield his eyes, and as he looked downward, he saw something that made him stop with an exclamation of astonishment.

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Between the rails, small footprints were distinctly visible in the snow. They continued straight up the tracks for a few yards, then crossed diagonally and were lost in the darkness. The print on the left side, in each case, showed a patch on the outer edge of the sole!

CHAPTER II

FOLLOWING THE TRAIL

“LOOK there, fellows!” Harold cried excitedly, pointing to the footprints. “What was Bob doing up here?”

“Perhaps he was walking around a train, just as we are,” Clinton replied quickly. “Downtown, near the station, they take care to leave the crossings clear, but out here in the suburbs, they don’t mind how long they block the road. In fact, I think they enjoy seeing a lot of impatient people lined up in wagons and autos, waiting for the train to get out of the way.”

But Wally shook his head in protest. “I’d think that was right, Clint, if the tracks went right across to the other side of the road,” he said, “but you’ll notice that they turn off toward the woods. That doesn’t look as if Bob was going straight home.”

“That’s so,” Clinton admitted. “I believe you’re right, Wally! I wonder what was going on in the woods to attract his attention.”

Harold was examining the footprints as carefully as the light from the locomotive would permit.

"I wish I had a lantern," he said eagerly. "Just look here, you fellows! You'll notice that Bob walked along as usual up to this point. His tracks are even and regular, so far. Right here, he seems to have stopped. Just see how much deeper the impression is, and how the snow is pushed aside, as if he had moved his feet around. After standing here, he walked off toward that other bank, and —"

Then the locomotive slowly backed down the track, leaving them in darkness.

"This concludes our performance, ladies and gentlemen," Harold announced, rising to his feet. "When the lights are turned on again, we shall endeavor to entertain you further. We thank you, one and all, for your kind attention and generous applause."

For a moment, the boys looked at one another in silent perplexity. Then Curtis asked the question in the minds of all:

"Well, what shall we do now?"

"Let's hurry back to school," Clinton suggested. "In ten minutes, we can find out whether Bob has come home or whether he still is missing. If nothing has been heard from him, I think we'd better get some lanterns and begin a thorough search. If we haven't

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accomplished anything else, at least we've discovered a starting-point if it does become necessary to hunt for him."

No one had any better advice to offer, so the boys hurried through the darkness toward St. Dunstan's.

"Probably it'll turn out that we're working up a mystery over nothing," Luther remarked. (He was trying to persuade himself of this fact, although he did not feel sufficient confidence to make him comfortable.) "It doesn't seem natural to imagine that anything very serious has happened to Bob."

The boys agreed with Luther's comment, but nevertheless an undercurrent of anxiety lingered in each heart. Robert Arland — the fun-loving, adventurous, good-natured, happy-go-lucky, unselfish Bob — was a general favorite at St. Dunstan's. Although younger than any of the students except the little fellows in the preparatory classes, he had a host of friends among the boys. The thought that he might be in danger or might have suffered some injury was enough to torment the minds of these good friends, as their several imaginations pictured possible peril.

"I'll tell you what," Clinton suggested, as they approached the school. "We don't want to frighten Mrs. Arland by letting her know that we haven't found

Bob. Suppose we get Paul to go up and ask if he is in. You see, she won't suspect that he is acting as a messenger for us, because he wasn't with us when we were talking to her. If Bob is there, Paul can tell him that we'd like to see him after study hour. If he hasn't come back, of course it won't be necessary to say anything."

"That's a good idea, Clint!" Wally exclaimed. "As usual, your thoughts are flowing freely. I was wondering how we could find out about Bob without frightening his mother, but I wouldn't have thought of that plan in a blue moon."

"I'll hustle right along," Paul promised. "Where shall I meet you fellows?"

"Let's stand inside the school vestibule," Luther suggested. "I'll turn into an icicle pretty soon, unless I get a chance to thaw out."

The others were just as cold, so they welcomed this opportunity to seek shelter from the wintry air. The school building stood midway between Senior Hall and Junior Hall, and toward this place of refuge the five members of the searching-party made their way. Paul, meanwhile, hurried off on his errand.

The minutes passed slowly. The little group stood around the steam radiator in the hall, speculating upon

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Bob's possible adventures, and impatiently awaiting the return of their messenger.

"It's just about time for supper," Curtis remarked, "and Bob would be home if he could possibly get there. If he —"

Just then, the door was flung open, letting in a rush of cold air, and Paul Eaton stepped inside. As soon as they saw his face, the boys guessed his message.

"Bob hasn't come home," he announced sadly, "and nothing's been heard from him."

Harold turned away from the radiator and buttoned up his coat. "I'm going back!" he declared. "Just as soon as I can get a lantern, I'll start for the railroad crossing. There's no use in the whole crowd going, though. You fellows'll miss supper if you leave now."

"What of it?" Wally protested. "It's no worse for us than for you."

"No, but it isn't necessary, Wally."

"You'll have to get permission before you go chasing off on such an errand," Clinton objected. "What do you suppose the Doctor would say if he knew that you were going prowling around the country?"

"I can imagine," Harold replied with a cheerful grin, "but let's not borrow trouble. If I tried to get

permission, most likely I'd fail, and in that case I'd suffer more than I shall for rushing off to Bob's rescue. Don't worry, Clint! Kindly bear my compliments to the ruling powers and tell them that every minute was precious, so it was not possible for me to call for them and ask them to join the expedition."

Clinton was not convinced, but before he could frame an appropriate reply, Luther said, "This is a time when a fellow has to act quickly. I believe Hal's right, and I'd like to go with him. I'm not much worried about anything that'll happen to fellows who leave the grounds for such a purpose as this. I suppose we all want to go, but we may as well divide our forces. Suppose three fellows start now, while the others get supper. As soon as this second group finishes, the fellows can follow the first party, provided they can get permission. I don't believe there's much doubt about that part of it. When the two groups come together, the first three fellows can come back and get supper, and the others can follow the trail. That'll divide the work, and sort of even things up."

"Spoken like a philosopher and a sage," Wally responded. "I'm willing to go with Hal, for better or for worse, and all the rest of it. Those crackers that we've been eating are of the imperishable kind,

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and I won't need anything more for a long time."

"I'll go, too!" Paul Eaton cried eagerly.

"All right!" Harold assented. "You fellows who stay behind can explain why we don't appear at the festal board, and be sure to use all the diplomatic skill that you can gather. Remember how much depends upon it. You know where to pick up our trail. It ought to be easy to follow us through the snow."

As they talked, the boys had been hurrying across the campus toward the gymnasium, where there was a store-room for the accommodation of various articles used about the grounds. Here they found lanterns, and, with a word of explanation to the faithful "Mike," who kept all such treasures under lock and key, Harold, Wally, and Paul set forth upon their mission.

When one's heart is burdened with anxiety, the discomforts of weather, delay, or natural hindrances are more keenly noticed. For this reason, probably, the trio of searchers thought the night by far the coldest which the winter thus far had brought. To add to the hardship of their quest, a raw, penetrating wind had gathered force since the sun had set, and now was blowing almost a gale.

"Funny about those woods down by the railroad

tracks," Paul observed, after they had tramped along in silence for a time. "Must be more than an acre there, but in other parts of the road you find a house every few rods, all the way from the city out to the school. Wouldn't you think the owner'd want to clear the land and put up some buildings on it?"

"Evidently he doesn't want to," Wally responded, turning half-way around to shield his face from the wind. "I've never seen a 'for sale' sign on the place, although there are plenty of warnings against trespassing."

"I've heard that the land belonged to some estate, and that it's all tangled up in a great big legal snarl," Harold announced. "Nothing can be done until it's straightened out. There's a good-looking house back on the other side of the woods, but it's all closed up, and the windows are covered with boards. Nobody's lived there for a long time."

They had reached the tracks now, and a warning whistle in the distance proclaimed the approach of the 6:22 from the south. While they waited for it to pass, the boys lighted their lanterns in the shelter of the high bank at the side of the tracks. They were determined to lose no time in picking up Robert Arland's trail, just as soon as the way was clear.

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"Now, let's see," Harold said as he started up the tracks. "The footprints were over this way about fifty yards. There's one thing certain. Bob hasn't been overcome with the heat. That wind feels as if it came right off the North Pole."

"We'll have to move quickly," Wally reminded them. "Don't forget that freight train on the siding. It'll come poking along in a few minutes."

"It won't take long to follow the marks until they clear the tracks," Harold responded. "See — they come up here, alongside the tracks. Then Bob stepped between the rails, and walked up as far as this" — here Harold led them forward for about ten yards — "Bob stood here a while, then walked —"

"Here comes the freight train!" Paul cried warningly.

"Well, it isn't afraid of us, and we'll be through in just about three seconds. Here's where Bob left the tracks, and you can see his footprints going off diagonally toward the woods."

They stepped over to the opposite track, and followed the print of the left rubber with a patch on the outer edge of the sole, as it covered the intervening space and was lost, finally, in the high snowbank beside the railroad.

"Here are other tracks," Wally exclaimed excitedly. "They seem to come down from the north, and see! This snowbank is all ploughed up along here, as if several people had climbed up to get into the woods."

"Right you are!" Harold agreed. "Let's plough it up a little more, and get into the woods ourselves. Most likely, we can pick up Bob's track there."

"I'll boost you fellows up," Paul volunteered. "Then you can give me a lift. I'm lighter than you."

Assisted by Paul, Harold and Wally scrambled up the steep, slippery bank. Just as they were making ready to extend helping hands to Paul, some unusual sounds not far distant caused them to stop suddenly.

The freight train was crawling past now, the cars rattling and bumping together, as the locomotive puffed and tugged in a valiant effort to get the long train under way. The wind whistled through the trees, swaying the bare branches and sweeping over the snow-covered ground. Above all these noises, the listening ears of the excited boys caught the sound of hoarse shouts and of some heavy object crashing through the woods.

Before they could decide what to do, a small boy rushed out from among the trees, not more than ten feet away. Without pausing, he leaped off the bank,

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stumbled, fell in a heap, and scrambled to his feet again.

Close behind him was a large, powerfully-built man, evidently in pursuit, and it immediately became apparent that the boy was straining every effort to escape, for, turning half-way around, he hurled a paper package which he carried directly into the face of his pursuer.

With a choking, gasping cry, the man lost his footing, and rolled around in the snow, rubbing his eyes and striving to struggle to his feet again. Without waiting to discover the result of his sudden attack, the boy rushed toward the slowly-moving train, grasped a support on the side of a flat car, placed his foot in the iron step beneath the platform, and climbed on board.

The light from the boys' lanterns enabled him to see more than the dark outline of the cars, especially as the snow acted as a reflector, and the floor of the car was littered with bits of straw and other pieces of packing left from the last freight shipment, and now frozen fast to the boards. These things helped the fugitive to reach the car without accident, although the venture was perilous, even with such favorable circumstances to aid him.

By this time, the man had staggered to his feet. He saw his victim escaping from him, and, with a wild cry of rage, dashed in pursuit.

“To the rescue!” Harold shouted, leaping off the bank. “Come on, fellows! He’s after Bob!”

These events had succeeded one another with bewildering rapidity. Now, however, the boys recovered from the first shock, and rushed forward. Wally and Paul were by no means certain that the boy on the car was Robert Arland. True, he was about Rob’s size, and suggested him in general appearance. Also, his manner of escape was quite characteristic of this youth, who was nimble of mind and muscle, and quite capable of handling himself in an emergency. Yet, in the darkness, it was impossible to see at all clearly, and it might have been some one else. Harold, in his usual impulsive manner, had made up his mind that the fugitive was the missing boy, and had rushed to his defense, entirely heedless of consequences.

The man immediately became aware of the change in the situation. Instead of trying to reach the flat car whereon the boy had taken refuge, he turned and climbed into a coal car a little in the rear of the one which he had seemed determined to gain. The

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ease with which he boarded the car suggested familiarity with this form of exercise, but the boys were too greatly excited to observe this fact.

Harold, with Wally and Paul close behind him, reached the car just as the man climbed inside. Having gone thus far, Harold was resolved to continue the chase. Dropping his lantern, he placed a foot in the iron step at the end of the car, and proceeded to climb on board.

As he did so, the man turned, and came toward him with a threatening gesture.

CHAPTER III

THE HOUSE BEYOND THE WOODS

“**N**OW for supper!” Curtis exclaimed, when the searching party had left the school grounds to seek the missing Robert Arland. “We’ll get something to eat, just as quickly as the laws of the land’ll let us, and then hurry after those hardy adventurers. I mean, we will if only we can persuade the powers that be to let us go. I hope we can! I have a good view of three sad fellows if we’re told to stay by our cheerful firesides.”

“I wish I’d gone with Hal and the others,” Luther sighed regretfully. “We haven’t had any excitement in a long time. Most likely, those fellows will find Bob and bring him back before we even get a chance to spread our sails. Then our names won’t be on the scroll of fame.”

“I hope Hal, and Wally, and Paul won’t stir up a peck of trouble for themselves by dashing off this way without a word of explanation to any of the faculty,” Clinton observed in an anxious tone. “It seems to me that they’re taking big risks, but it’s just

like Hal to plunge into trouble without stopping to think."

"And just like Grandpa to worry over it," Curtis responded mischievously. "Wouldn't it be exciting if they were expelled? Then we could go on a strike until they were taken back. Maybe we could stir up a regular revolution! Think of that chance!"

"If I had an imagination like yours, Curt, I'd pack it in ice to reduce the swelling," Luther remarked. "If you really enjoy revolutions, you'd better hit the trail for Central America. Don't fret about the naughty children, Clint! We know Mr. Bruce well enough to feel sure that he'll help us out. Maybe we can persuade him to lead the relief expedition. I don't suppose Faculty will be real pleased if they find out what our fellows are doing, but under the circumstances I'll be surprised if any serious consequences follow."

They had reached the dining-hall now, and Clinton replied as they walked toward their table, "Well, if Hal wants to get up a patrol of Boy Scouts, he can't afford to take any chances. I hope things will get straightened out without much fuss."

"I'm not so sure that Lute is right about there being no glory left for us," Curtis added. "I'm

thinking that our job will be even harder than the one those fellows are tackling. You see, all they have to do is to follow Bob's trail until they find him. We've got to depend upon such signs as they may leave for us, or upon being able to discover their tracks in the snow. We must travel quickly enough to overtake them, too. It's no easy stunt, you see!"

"Yes, unless we do that we won't be of any assistance," Clinton remarked. "They're the explorers, and we're the relief expedition. I think they'll feel like Arctic explorers to-night. We'll be in better condition to face this cold wind if we have a comfortable feeling inside — and I don't mean conscience, either."

Then Mr. Bruce took his seat at the table, and conversation ceased. To readers of former "St. Dunstan" books, Mr. Bruce is an old friend. For the benefit of others, be it explained that he had been the "guide, philosopher, and friend" of these boys ever since the days of the previous summer vacation when he had journeyed with them on that never-to-be-forgotten tramp from Boston to Camp St. Dunstan. He taught chemistry and physics at the school, and presided over the table where these boys gathered thrice daily with enthusiasm restrained only by the proprieties of "table manners."

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"Where are the others — Harold, Wally, and Paul?" Mr. Bruce asked, as he looked around the table and noticed the vacant seats.

"Helping Mrs. Arland," Luther replied quickly. "Bob is missing. We've been looking for him since half-past four, and haven't found any trace except some footprints in the snow, down by the railroad tracks. We came back to report. The others are keeping up the search."

"Well now, I'm sorry to hear that — very sorry, indeed," Mr. Bruce replied with genuine concern in his tones. "I hope that nothing serious has happened to Rob."

There was an interval of silence, during which Mr. Bruce gazed thoughtfully into space. The boys wondered whether he would ask who had permitted the searching-party to undertake its special mission, but no such information was sought. Some teachers know when to ask questions. Mr. Bruce also knew when to refrain from asking them.

Curtis, encouraged by his silence concerning the matter which troubled their consciences, ventured to ask after a time, "May we go out after supper, Mr. Bruce? We'd like to relieve the searching-party, so

that those fellows can come back and get something to eat."

At St. Dunstan's, no student was allowed to leave the grounds after supper unless accompanied by some member of the faculty. The relief expedition, however, felt confident that its mission was sufficiently urgent and important to make it advisable for some teacher to sacrifice time and comfort in order to lead its members forth upon their quest. They hoped that Mr. Bruce would find it possible to go with them, for no member of the faculty would be welcomed quite so heartily as a chaperon. It was a positive relief, therefore, when he settled the matter by replying:

"Fortunately, I have no important engagement for this evening, so I shall be glad to volunteer as a member of the relief expedition. Santa Claus brought me a Thermos bottle for Christmas, and this trip will offer a good chance to use it. Before we start, I'll fill it with hot coffee, and that will help to keep us warm if we are exposed to the cold air for any great length of time."

Soon after the conclusion of the evening meal, the relief expedition started on its mission. The four

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members of the party were dressed in their warmest clothing, and each carried a lantern. Mr. Bruce stopped at the school office to report their errand, and then they walked rapidly across the campus, through the school gate, and down the road toward the railway crossing.

“Now here’s where we discovered Bob’s footprints in the snow,” Luther announced, when they had reached the tracks. “We ought to find signs of the other fellows around here somewhere. Yes, there are the marks of their feet. See? The tracks come up out of the ditch at this point—three sets, all mixed up together.”

It was easy to follow so plain a trail, and they hurried along until the high, snow-covered bank at the edge of the woods blocked their advance.

“Here’s where we do some Alpine climbing,” Curtis remarked without enthusiasm. “I guess it’ll take a derrick to get me up there.”

“Or an aeroplane,” Clinton amended. “Don’t be afraid, Curt. You can climb that without even getting overheated. Suppose you go up first. That will sort of press down the snow, and the rest of us won’t have so far to travel.”

“Your kindness is exceeded only by your nerve,”

was the good-natured report. "Well, here goes! 'Heights by great men reached and kept, were not attained by'—aeroplanes. You fellows had better not stand too close to me, because if I should slip, you'd feel as if an avalanche had fallen onto you."

With many a protesting grunt, Curtis mounted the high bank, the others aiding him as best they could, and following speedily.

"Plenty of marks here in the snow," Luther remarked, when the relief expedition was drawn up at the top of the bank. "Funny, though! You can see the patched rubber going off through the woods, but the three fellows don't seem to have followed it. Their trail ends right after they climbed up here. What do you make of that?"

"Suppose we put ourselves in the place of the searching-party," Mr. Bruce suggested. "Perhaps we may discover a reason for what appears to be an abrupt change of plans. They followed Rob's trail to the snowbank. They climbed up. Then they abandoned their original plan, which, as I understand it, was to follow the trail until some important discovery was made. Why? Evidently they received some information here, or perhaps they picked up a clue that sent them in another direction. Just look

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around within a radius of ten yards from this spot. You don't find any indication that they went farther than that from the starting-point, either up or down the bank or back in the woods. Unless you think they are hiding in some of these trees, there is but one explanation that occurs to me. I think they climbed down the bank within a short time after they reached it."

"Sherlock Holmes couldn't have worked out that deduction any better, Mr. Bruce!" Curtis exclaimed in genuine admiration. "I wonder why they did it."

"We may find an explanation in the course of the footprints farther up the tracks," Mr. Bruce suggested. "I'll climb down and make a careful search. If I find anything that looks interesting, I'll call you."

He jumped down to the ground below, seized a lantern, and slowly walked away, looking carefully at the marks that indented the smooth surface of the snowy covering. In a minute or two, the boys heard him calling, and hastened to his side. Mr. Bruce pointed to the snow between the rails of the nearer track, and slowly swung his lantern back and forth.

"What do you make of that?" he asked, and his voice expressed anxiety.

"Bob's tracks!" cried Luther. "Going up toward the north, and rather far apart. Looks as if he was running for all he was worth. Here's another print, too—large and not very well formed. I should say that some man was chasing Bob along here."

"That is the way I read it," Mr. Bruce agreed. "Let's follow this new trail."

They hurried forward, noting with satisfaction that Rob still was running. This assured them that he had been able to keep ahead of his pursuer.

"Here's where he dodges over to the other side!" Clinton exclaimed in a few minutes. "See! His course changes!"

They walked across to the opposite track, then stopped abruptly, and, with muttered exclamations of surprise and perplexity, circled slowly around searching every square foot of snow for prints of a rubber with a patch on the outer edge of the left sole. It seemed as if they had suddenly reached the end of the trail.

"Well, if that isn't queer!" Curtis exclaimed. "The tracks are plain as day, right up to this point, and then they end all at once, just as if Bob had vanished in the air overhead."

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"Maybe he was caught," Luther suggested, but Mr. Bruce shook his head.

"I think not," he replied, "because the tracks of Rob's pursuer end some yards back. Did you notice that the space here between the rails was entirely without footprints until we stepped over?"

"Yes, sir. Bob's trail ends right alongside the track," Luther responded.

"That would seem to indicate that Rob stopped close beside this track used by trains for the north," Mr. Bruce continued. "What would be likely to make him halt?"

Perhaps a train was passing," Curtis suggested. "I don't know of anything else that would block the track."

Mr. Bruce nodded. "That was the idea I had in mind, Curtis," he declared. "Rob's trail is quite clear up to this point. Then it stops abruptly, and we can find no further trace of it. I think he must have climbed on board a train as it was passing. I can offer no other explanation, although I should be glad to believe that he had found some safer means of escape. It looks as if our young friend had had a hard experience."

"Well, what became of the man who was chasing

Bob?" Luther wanted to know. "Did he get on the train, too?"

There could be no answer to this question save that given by the silent record in the snow, so they turned back until they came to the place where the trail of Rob's pursuer ended. This, also, was close to the railroad track.

While the others were studying this part of the problem, Clinton slipped away from the group to make an independent investigation. In a few minutes, he returned to report his discoveries.

"I think I have an explanation," he announced. "If you look back there a little way, you'll find a grand mix-up of footprints. These end at the railroad, just like the others. Now it seems to me that this is what happened. Our fellows followed Bob's trail to the edge of the woods. While they were standing there, they saw Bob running past with a man after him. They joined in the chase right away. Bob climbed the train, and so did the man. Then the searching-party had to do the same thing or leave Bob to the mercy of this man— whoever he may have been. So all hands hopped onto the train, and probably are miles away by this time.

"Here's another thing! Do you remember that

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long train of empty cars that we saw this afternoon? It was just backing down on the siding to let the 6:22 go past. Our crowd reached this point just about the time the freight train would be passing, so this makes me think that they are on board now, traveling up north somewhere in an empty car."

"That explanation seems reasonable," Mr. Bruce replied, "and it is in harmony with the record left in the snow. I hope our boys are safe. The things that we have discovered make me feel decidedly anxious."

Clinton sighed, as he said in a troubled tone, "Hal's so reckless that he's likely to get into 'most any kind of scrape, and Paul Eaton would follow him without thinking, as long as his nerve didn't fail. Wally's with them, though, and you can count on him to keep cool and to act sensible. I believe they'll come out all right."

There was a moment of thoughtful silence. Then Luther asked, "Well, what shall we do now? Hadn't we better go back to the school and see what develops?"

"Before we do anything else, let's drink some hot coffee," Mr. Bruce responded. "We're cold and anxious and perplexed — a most uncomfortable combina-

tion. Perhaps a warm drink may cheer us and give a bit of inspiration to guide our future course."

He produced his Thermos bottle, saying as he poured the hot fluid, "I saved this for the searching-party and Rob, because I fancied that they would be cold and tired when we came upon them. It seems unlikely now that they will need it, however, and I think we do."

Somehow, the courage of the relief expedition revived after the stimulating drink, and they were inclined to face the situation more hopefully.

"It won't take us more than fifteen minutes to follow Bob's trail through the woods," Luther suggested, as they turned back, "and I'd like to do that before we give up our efforts to find the other fellows."

"That's so," Curtis agreed. "It's very evident they didn't go through there at all. Perhaps we can learn what sidetracked Bob in the first place. What do you think about it, Mr. Bruce?"

"It surely is worth trying," he declared promptly. "I'm thankful for one thing, in spite of the somewhat disappointing results of our mission. The snow isn't frozen so hard that footsteps make little or no impression in it. Indeed, I doubt whether the tempera-

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ture really is as low as this raw northeast wind would make us believe."

They retraced their steps, climbed once more to the top of the snow-covered bank, and followed the prints of the left rubber with a patch on the outer edge of the sole, as they wound in and out among the trees. Here and there, it seemed as if Rob had halted, but always the trail led them onward toward the farther side of the woods.

Here stood a solitary house which had been tenantless for several years. The windows were covered with boards, and the place had a forlorn, deserted appearance. Towards this house, the trail led them, though the relief expedition could think of no reason for Rob's interest in this particular bit of real estate.

"What brought Bob here?" Luther muttered, lowering his voice as if the last tenant, long since departed, might be disturbed by a louder tone.

"Something unusual, depend upon it!" Curtis assured him. "Bob isn't given to chasing sunbeams, or to looking for a pot of gold at the end of a rainbow."

Up to the dilapidated fence, through the gate, now hanging by one hinge, and onward toward the front piazza the trail continued. The relief expedition no-

ticed that other prints showed distinctly in the doorway, and it was difficult to distinguish the mark of the patched rubber.

While they halted near the piazza steps, they were startled to hear the sound of some one walking over the uncarpeted floors of the house. Before they could move or speak, they heard a rattling of bolts. Evidently, some person inside was trying to unfasten the front door.

Instinctively, they drew closer together for mutual protection. Then the front door swung slowly back on hinges that squeaked dismally in protest, and a boy stepped out on the piazza.

CHAPTER IV

TRAVELING BY RAIL

WHEN Harold Chester rushed to the relief of Robert Arland, he took no thought for his personal safety, nor did he pause to consider the possibilities of a serious ending to the adventure.

Although not yet a Boy Scout, except in spirit, he had that true scout courage which has inspired brave deeds and heroic sacrifices ever since the record of human events chronicles the valor of the first man who faced death to save another from peril.

At first, the thrill of excitement mastered all other elements, and conquered that instinct of self-protection which is so strong in the average human being. Perhaps it was this stimulus which nerved Harold and his companions to pursue the unknown man. Possibly, true courage may not have inspired them, just for the first minute or two.

But when the rough, burly, ugly-looking man turned on Harold with a savage warning and a threatening gesture, the situation instantly reached a crisis. To

turn back would insure personal safety, but also it would result in leaving Rob to the doubtful mercy of his pursuer. To go forward would almost certainly bring painful injury, but it would give them the satisfaction of being faithful to one whom they were striving to protect — even though it might be “faithful unto death.”

To the credit of the boys, let it be recorded that none of them thought of deserting Rob. Whatever motive may have led them up to this crisis, it is certain beyond all doubt that only clear grit and magnificent courage enabled them to continue the pursuit when it involved real and very present danger.

Harold clung precariously to the side of the car. One foot was braced against the iron step below, while the other moved frantically about in search of a firm resting-place. He clutched the slippery, grimy boards with desperate determination, realizing how serious might be the consequences of a fall from such a place. Then he heard the gruff words, and felt the pressure of the stranger's hands upon his shoulders.

“Get down off that car!” growled the ugly voice.

Harold set his teeth, and instinctively lowered his head to protect it from attack. Then an idea flashed

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into his mind. Possibly he might gain time if he entered into conversation with Rob's unknown pursuer, so he gasped breathlessly:

"I can't get off while you have hold of me!"

Thinking that the boy would be glad to escape if allowed to do so, the man relaxed his hold and moved backward a step. At the same instant, Wally cried:

"Duck, Hal! Quick! 'Way down!"

Mechanically, Harold obeyed. Then there was a sudden crash of breaking glass, a cry of surprise and pain, and a heavy fall.

"Get on board!" Wally urged now. "Hustle! Not a second to spare!"

And again, Harold obeyed, although his cramped muscles and numb fingers prevented him from breaking any records. As soon as he was inside the car, he realized what had taken place. His lantern had fallen unheeded from his grasp when he had attempted to board the moving train. The fall had extinguished the light, and Wally, with rare presence of mind, had stooped quickly to pick it up, gathering it in "on the run" as he hurried forward, while he changed his own lighted lantern to his left hand. In the perilous moment when it had seemed as if Harold would be pushed off the train, Wally had conceived the des-



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perate idea of hurling the unlighted lantern at the man who was threatening Harold. Fortunately, he was so close that it required no especial dexterity to throw the missile with accurate aim. In his excitement, Wally probably put all his strength into the attack. However that may have been, the man was stretched helplessly upon the floor of the car, with Harold's broken and battered lantern beside him.

While Harold's confused brain was grasping a realizing sense of what had taken place, Wally and Paul were climbing into the car. Presently, they were standing beside him, and again the rescuing party was united.

These exciting incidents had succeeded one another so rapidly that less than five minutes had elapsed since the time when the boys had dashed to the rescue of Robert Arland. The train was moving slowly, though gradually gathering speed as it wound its way northward. For a moment, the three members of the rescuing party clung to the side of the car, silent and breathless.

Then Harold cried, "That was great, Wally! How did you ever do it?"

"It was the only thing to be done," Wally replied modestly. "It's the first time I've ever attacked a

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man, and I hope it'll be the last." It fairly made my blood run cold —"

"Don't try to make us believe that you haven't nerve, Wally!" interrupted Paul.

"Oh, I didn't mean that I was afraid," Wally replied quickly, "but it seemed like rather a brutal thing to do. There was no help for it, though! In another minute, Hal would have been pushed off the car, and the chances are that he would have been badly injured."

"That's right," Harold agreed, speaking more soberly than was his habit. "I thought of that. It was a mighty ticklish situation, Wally, but your cool head and strong arm got me out of it, just as if such things were everyday matters with you. It isn't the first time, either, that you've helped me out of trouble, Wally, and I —"

"Oh, cut it out!" Wally begged. "Leave your bouquets with the doorkeeper!"

During the foregoing conversation, the boys had gathered about the prostrate man, who now was beginning to show signs of restlessness. While Paul held the lanterns, Wally knelt beside his victim.

"Nothing much the matter with him," he reported after a brief examination. "The lantern struck him

on the side of the head, just as he turned to see what I was doing. He's cut and bruised a bit, and stunned. I think that's all! In a minute or two, he'll be as lively as ever."

"And then what'll we do with him?" Paul asked in some alarm.

"That *will* be a problem," Wally muttered thoughtfully, rising to his feet. "We can't drop him overboard without running a big risk of hurting him badly. We don't want to have him making trouble for us here in the car, and yet we can't tie him up, because there's nothing to use —"

"We have something!" Harold interrupted eagerly. "Only, I'm not sure that they'll hold him."

"What's that, Hal?"

"Neckties," was the triumphant response. "I guess it won't hurt us to chip in a tie apiece to aid the Cause, especially right after Christmas. This is just the time when a fellow has about twice as many as he needs, and we'll be every bit as warm without this much of our costumes."

As he spoke, Harold untied a vivid lavender scarf, and the others hastened to add their contributions.

"Don't leave any diamond sunbursts in your to-day-only-three-for-a-dollar neckwear," Harold warned

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them. "Wouldn't it please the loving givers of these decorations if they could see us using them to tie up a tramp lying in a coal car?"

"You and Paul tackle his legs, Hal," Wally suggested. "I'll try to fasten his arms. We'll have to hurry. In a few seconds, he'll be ready for action."

"I'm afraid these won't hold very well," Paul ventured anxiously, "especially if he's at all strong, and he certainly looks as if he might be."

"The Cause needs further sacrifices," Wally declared solemnly. "Here goes a handkerchief as my offering — I happen to have brought two — and say, fellows! Why can't we use shoestrings? Our shoes'll stay on until we can get more, and they'll make good, tough cords that ought to hold the tramp even if he does struggle with all his strength. I don't suppose it'll be very pleasant to walk back to school with our shoes trying to slip off at every step, but I'd rather go through that than risk a fight with this ugly-looking individual."

"You certainly aimed straight, Wally, when you hurled your bouquet at him," Harold remarked admiringly, as he commenced to draw the lacings from his shoes. "Was that the lantern I dropped?"

Wally nodded, and hastened to change the subject

by remarking, "It's so cold to-night that the job of getting your shoestrings out is harder than it seems. My fingers are numb already. This fellow here in the car looks like a tramp, doesn't he?"

"He certainly does, Wally, but you can never tell about such things. He may be a college professor studying sociology, or a magazine writer in disguise. Wouldn't it be great if he should turn out to be one or t'other?"

"Great, says you!" Wally cried in a startled tone. "Hardly! It would be decidedly embarrassing."

"That's what I meant, only I'd forgotten how to spell embarrassing," Harold explained.

"I think he's the genuine article," Paul said decidedly. "Why was he chasing Bob if he's only a hobo in disguise?"

"Perhaps Bob caressed him with a snowball."

"That might be. It would be just like him to do such a stunt."

"Besides we're not sure that it was Bob," Wally reminded them.

"My stars! But you're the hard one to convince!" Harold retorted playfully. "Haven't you got the idea out of your head that we've been risking our necks to rescue some strange kid? Why, I told

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you it was Bob! What more proof do you need?"

"Oh, it may have been Bob," Wally admitted, "and that reminds me—how is Bob getting along all by his lonesome on that flat car just ahead?"

Harold whistled, and Paul exclaimed: "That's so! We've been so worked up over our adventure, and so busy tying up the tramp that we'd most forgotten Bob. It must be colder'n Greenland's icy mountains up there, with nothing to break the force of this wind. We're sheltered some by the freight car just ahead."

Harold nodded. "That must be right between our Pullman and his," he said. "Say, Wally, your patient doesn't seem to be coming around very fast. What's the matter with him, anyhow?"

"Oh, I think he's only stunned," Wally made answer, and his tone showed that he was trying to persuade himself of this fact. "I hope he's not badly hurt." He swung his lantern close to the prostrate man, and bent over him for another examination.

"I wonder if we can climb over to find out how Bob's getting on?" Harold said, making a mental calculation of the distance to be covered.

He and Paul stood in silence for a moment, weighing the chances of success and failure. The train was moving along at its usual speed now, and the same

thought occurred to both boys. To climb out of the coal car, up over the freight, and down again to the one on which they believed Rob to be travelling would have been a dangerous venture at any time. Now, with a cold wind blowing and the cars slippery with ice and snow, it would be exceedingly perilous, especially as none of the three boys was accustomed to this form of exercise. Besides, it was not certain that they could be of any practical help to Rob, even if they should succeed in making the trip in safety.

It was Wally who finally broke the silence. He had turned from his examination of their fellow-traveller, and was standing close beside them.

“No use, fellows!” he declared, shaking his head in positive dissent. “We can’t climb up that ladder, and over the car ahead without running desperate risks. If it was necessary for us to do it, of course we wouldn’t dare to think of the danger. We’d go right ahead, and do what seemed to be our duty. As things are now, though, what good could we do? Bob doesn’t need us any more than we need him, and anyhow the train’ll slow down when it reaches the junction, which can’t be many miles away. Then we can hop off and see how Bob’s getting along.

“In the meantime, we might raise a yell, just to

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see whether he's all right. I'd like to be sure that it really is Bob, and not some other fellow that we've been helping by mistake. The joke certainly will be on us, if it turns out that we've butted into some fuss among people we've never seen before. Come on! All together, now! One — two — three!"

They united their voices in a loud shout, but no response came floating back from the car on which the boy had taken refuge.

"That's funny!" Harold muttered. "Maybe the train makes so much racket that Bob can't hear us. Let's try again!"

Another shout disturbed the surrounding atmosphere, and the tramp on the floor stirred uneasily and muttered some confused sentences.

"Not so loud," Harold warned them. "You'll wake the baby."

A louder growl came from their captive now, and the tramp struggled with his shackles in a determined effort to break them.

"Good thing we made 'em strong," Wally observed in a low tone. "I'm thankful now that I did sacrifice the shoestrings. Peripatetic Philander seems to have considerable muscle."

"Peripatetic Philander" delivered some emphatic

and passionate comments, and continued his struggle. Also he made boastful threats of the things he would do to his captors when he freed himself from the restraining fetters. The boys watched him with tense eagerness, too deeply absorbed for conversation.

The train was moving more slowly now. Far off in the distance, a locomotive whistle sounded faintly, and the signal drew an answer from the freight engine.

"We're coming to the junction," Paul announced in a tone of relief. "Most likely, there's a train coming on the other track, and we'll have to wait for it to pass. See! We've almost stopped now. Shall we get off? We can jump down without getting hurt."

"What? Get off and leave Peripatetic Philander? Perish the thought!" Harold cried in mock horror. "What shall we do with him, anyhow? If we leave him here, all tied up, he may freeze. Yet we don't dare untie our home-made shackles."

"Let's turn him over to the train crew," Wally suggested. "There's a brakeman coming now."

The train had come to a full stop, and some one with a lantern was walking forward from the caboose at the rear end of the long train.

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“Hello! What are you fellows doing here?” he exclaimed in surprise when he reached the coal car with its passengers.

Wally explained their presence, and briefly described their adventure, the brakeman listening with evident interest. During the progress of the narrative, he climbed on board the car and looked into the face of the captive.

“I know him,” he declared with a chuckle. “He’s traveled on this road a long time, but he’s very fussy about accommodations. He doesn’t care for Pullmans because there’s not enough ventilation to suit him, so he picks out a freight car whenever he wants to take a trip.”

“Well, will you take care of him for us, please?” Wally inquired courteously. “We want to go up and rescue our friend — the boy I told you about — and then get back to school again.”

“Sure I will!” the brakeman promised good-naturedly. “I’ve got to go forward to see the engineer just at this minute, but I reckon that ’ere passenger’ll be waiting for me when I get back.”

He swung himself to the ground and walked toward the engine, the boys following as quickly as they could. The tramp had rolled over into one corner, from which

position he watched their departure with sullen rage. His comments were less vociferous than at first they had been, but no one by the wildest stretch of the imagination would have believed that he felt contented and happy.

A freight car was situated directly in front of the one in which the boys had traveled, with several flat cars ahead of it. The members of the rescuing party looked around with alert eagerness, searching each car and calling Rob's name at intervals.

Rob was not on any of the cars.

CHAPTER V

THE RETURN OF THE SEARCHING-PARTY

“**T**HAT’S funny!” Harold muttered. “If Bob isn’t here, where is he?” and he turned toward the others as if they could furnish the desired information.

“You can search me,” Paul responded helplessly. “I hope he hasn’t fallen off.”

“I don’t believe he stayed on very long!” Wally cried suddenly. He had remained silent for several minutes, during which time he had given careful thought to the problem. “The idea has just struck me, but it sounds reasonable. Just put yourselves in Bob’s place, and you’ll see what I mean.”

“If that fellow really was Bob Arland, he knew that the man who was chasing him could climb on board the train as well as he could — better, maybe. So, instead of sitting down quietly on an icicle and waiting to be grabbed, I believe he made up his mind to fool his pursuer by dropping off the car on the opposite side and making a dash for home.”

“That’s right!” Harold agreed. “’Rah for Wally,

the wise man from the east! If Bob did that, he's home by this time. It strikes me that the joke is on us. Here we've been riding three miles in a coal car for the sake of protecting a kid who wasn't there."

"We lost sight of him after he climbed onto the car," Paul remarked, "so he could have jumped off the other side as easily as not, and we wouldn't have known it. He might have given a yell, though, so we'd have known where he was."

"He couldn't have done that without letting the tramp know that he'd skipped," Wally reminded him, "and besides it's likely that he hadn't much breath left for yelling purposes after he struck the ground. Just remember what a stirring time he was having. We couldn't have asked him to do any more."

Paul laughed. "Oh, well, I'm satisfied," he declared. "We had the excitement and the glory —"

"And the appetite!" Wally interrupted. "Was it this week or last that we ate those crackers? I don't know how you fellows feel, but if I saw a nice, tender, juicy beefsteak, with some potatoes fried a —"

"Say, will you stop, or will it be our sad duty to check your eloquence?" Harold broke in. "Here I've been trying to bear up bravely and to be cheerful in spite of hardship, as becomes a gay and gallant

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scout, and you come along with your mean remarks. If I wasn't so good-natured, I'd refuse to speak to you any more. I'd cross your name off my calling list. I wouldn't look at you. I wouldn't even let my cat play with your cat."

"Spare me, noble Scout!" Wally begged. "I'll be good! Hereafter, I'll tell you what I'm going to say before I say it, and if you don't like it, I'll try to change my remarks. I'm always willing to oblige my friends. But I am hungry, all the same!"

"So am I — starved!" Harold admitted. "Let's see, what is it that Arctic explorers eat? Pelican?"

"No — pemmican," Wally informed him, "also gumdrops. Got any gumdrops, Paul?"

"No, nor any pemmican either — whatever that is. What is it, Wally?"

"Some kind of dried meat, I believe, cut into thin slices and mixed with other things. It doesn't take up much room outside, but it does inside. I shouldn't think it would taste very well, but it's wonderfully nourishing."

"We'll have some," Harold observed. "Waiter, bring us a portion of pemmican, with mushroom sauce and plenty of gravy."

"See how he flies to do your bidding," Wally

laughed. "Well, we may as well be cheerful in spite of our trials and hardships. Are we downhearted?"

"No!" cried the boys, all together, and the declaration seemed to bring cheer to their spirits.

"We might sing something, I suppose," Wally suggested. "That would make us forget how cold it is, and how hungry we are. Come on! 'All together let us sing. Let us make the welkin ring.' What's a welkin ring?"

"I never owned one nor knew anybody who did," Harold replied. "I don't see why we should torture the neighbors by singing. They haven't done us any harm. If we should lift our voices in sweet harmony, the people along our line of march would come out with pitchforks to persuade us to stop."

During this conversation, the boys had been walking southward alongside the train. As they passed the coal car in which they had traveled, "Peripatetic Philander" uttered some vehement remarks, but the boys hurried on their way without giving further attention to him.

Now the signal lights at the rear end of the freight train were behind them, and they faced a walk of more than three miles on a cold, windy night, over ground covered with ice and snow. Then, too, they

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had eaten nothing since noon, except a few crackers, and their shoes were without lacings, these having been sacrificed for the restraint of their captive. Altogether, it was a weary, hungry, uncomfortable trio that commenced the homeward trip, and it was difficult for the boys to maintain the habitual good nature and cheerful spirit of self-control, for which they were noted among the students at St. Dunstan's.

"What do you suppose will be done to our friend, Wally?" Paul inquired.

"I don't know what these train crews do to tramps caught stealing rides. Perhaps, if there was a policeman around, he might get free board and lodging for a time, but the nearest police force is miles away. They may take off his shackles and let him go. In that case, perhaps he'll start after us to give us a sort of demonstration of his gratitude for our care of him."

Paul looked around apprehensively, but saw nothing alarming.

"Maybe we'd better move a little faster," he suggested, quickening his pace. "If that tramp should tackle us, we might get hurt. He's a tough-looking object."

"You're too fussy, Paul," Harold objected. "In

fact, I might even say that you're pernickety. Beauty is only skin deep, you must remember. Our old friend is not favored as to looks, but who can tell how many manly virtues are concealed 'neath that rough exterior?"

"Don't be frightened, Paul," Wally observed in a low tone. "It's hunger that makes him talk wildly. I've known him to have such attacks before. Say! Won't it be time enough to hurry when we really see the enemy coming after us? We have over two miles before us, and our feet'll be sore if we rush madly along with our shoes trying their best to leave us."

"Good idea, Wally!" Harold responded heartily. "You do get good ideas once in a while. If only it were summer, we could go barefoot. Wouldn't it create a sensation at school if we should appear that way?"

"I can just imagine how much talk it would stir up," Wally chuckled, "but as far as sensations go, I think we've had our share to-day. I wish I knew that Bob was safe. If he gets back to his mother without being harmed in any way, we won't feel that our efforts have been thrown away."

"Yes, and our neckties and shoestrings. Don't for-

get to include those when you speak of our efforts. We might send Bob a bill, something like this: To three scarfs and three pairs of shoestrings used to prevent capture by Peripatetic Philander — how much shall we charge? ”

“ You’re breaking the Scout Law,” Paul Eaton reminded him. “ Scouts are not supposed to charge anything for such work. If you’re a scout, you can work for wages, but you can’t take tips nor expect to get paid for doing a kind turn.”

“ We don’t, Paul,” Harold assured him. “ I was only trying to say something funny, so’s to forget a certain empty spot within. Of course, we wouldn’t think of charging Bob for our sacrificed finery. I suppose we might send a bill to Peripatetic Philander, only we don’t know his address.”

“ No, we gave him those things as a Christmas present several weeks behind time,” Wally objected, “ so we don’t want him to get the idea that we’re looking for any return. He won’t feel so cold now with nine extra articles of clothing to keep him warm — three neckties and six shoestrings.”

“ Much good may they do him!” Harold said fervently. “ I hope he won’t take a notion to come after us. I don’t feel like tackling him just at present.”

"Alas, I fear we never shall see his beauteous face again!" Wally sighed. "As far as he is concerned, I think we are perfectly safe. He'll be too stiff and sore to attempt to follow our trail even if he feels brave enough to tackle three enemies at once."

"It's too bad we hadn't organized our scout patrol before this thing happened," Harold said, after they had walked along in silence for a time. "We've practically been doing scout work for the last few hours, and have been trying our best to live up to the Scout Law."

"So we have!" Paul agreed. "I think it will be a fine thing for St. Dunstan's to get a few patrols organized. We can study signalling and signs of different kinds during the winter, and then when spring comes, we can get out-of-doors and learn a lot about natural history. That's what I like!"

"Yes, and we might have a First Aid class this winter," Harold suggested. "Scouts are supposed to know what to do in case of accident, but I'm afraid I couldn't do much for any one who needed help before a doctor could get around. I always want to help all I can when a person is sick or hurt, because I feel awfully sorry for any one like that, but I don't know how to be of much practical use. It would be

just like me to fan somebody who had a chill and plaster a fever patient with hot water bags."

"There ought to be enough fellows at St. Dunstan's to form a First Aid class," Wally remarked thoughtfully. "I'd like to get into one, because the work is mightily interesting. We had a class in Boston just before I started at St. Dunstan's, and I was about half-way through the course when I came here. It's a great advantage to have such training. Just think, you might be able to save a life some time by knowing what to do at the moment it needed to be done."

"Are you going to wear the regular scout uniform, Harold, if the Doctor lets you form the patrol?" Paul inquired.

"Sure thing! What's the use of being a scout if you can't wear a uniform?"

"We'll look very dressy, I dare say. What will you call the patrol?"

"Haven't picked out a name yet. After this arctic adventure, we might call ourselves the Polar Bear Patrol."

"I wish we could get Mr. Bruce to act as scout-master," Wally remarked. "He makes a fine leader and he knows a lot about camping and woodcraft, too. He'd be just the one! I'll tell you what! Maybe if

we organized a St. Dunstan Troop, with several patrols, we might go off on a special trip somewhere next summer. We could camp along the way and get a taste of real scout life."

"Fine!" cried Harold. "That would give us something to work for, and it would be pleasant to look forward to it and plan for it."

"Let's plan for it now," Paul begged. "It'll make us warmer if we talk about next summer."

"Yes, let's imagine that we're picking our way over these ties on a hot July day," Wally suggested. "The sun is blazing away, there isn't a breath of air, and the perspiration is just rolling down our faces."

"That's too much for my feeble imagination," Harold declared. "I can't remember what it feels like to be as hot as that, Wally."

Paul was casting a searching look behind them. "I don't see anything of our enemy," he announced. "I guess he won't bother us any more," and this conclusion brought him very evident relief.

They toiled onward, cold, hungry, and footsore, but determined to maintain cheerful spirits in spite of everything. Presently they found themselves approaching the place where their exciting chase commenced.

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“Look along the ground on the outside of the track,” Wally advised. “If Bob did jump off the car and go home, maybe you’ll find some trace of him in the snow.”

“Yes — look there!” Harold exclaimed a little later, stopping abruptly and pointing to the ground. “There’s a mark in the snow that might have been made by some one falling and rolling over.”

“See if there are footprints further on,” Paul ventured. “They’ll tell the story.”

“Here are some that look like the others made by Bob,” Wally announced. “They’re not so distinct, but that left one seems to show a little patch on the outer edge of the sole. And see! They go up toward the road. It looks to me as if Bob had escaped just as we thought he did. Probably he’s home again now.”

“I hope he’s safe,” Harold sighed. “I see where I don’t do any studying to-night. I’m dead tired. Memory and wits will have to carry me through to-morrow.”

They reached the school grounds between eight-thirty and nine. As they entered Junior Hall, Wally said:

“ We’d better stop at Mrs. Arland’s door and inquire about Bob.”

Accordingly, they halted while he pressed the electric button.

In a moment, the door was opened, and then they stood face to face with Robert Arland.

CHAPTER VI

THE ADVENTURES OF THE RELIEF EXPEDITION

WHILE Harold, Wally, and Paul were having such exciting and unusual experiences, the other three boys, with Mr. Bruce as chaperon, were sharing the thrilling events of that frosty night in a manner quite different, though perhaps equally sensational.

When they reached the house beyond the woods, there was nothing about its forlorn and deserted appearance to make them suspect that any one had taken refuge therein. Therefore, when they heard the sound of some one walking across the bare floor, their surprise may be imagined. It was startling enough, out there in the darkness with a cold wind moaning through the trees, to hear these muffled footsteps and to wonder what they signified; but when the door opened and a boy stepped out, they were dumbfounded with amazement.

The light streaming across the snow from their lanterns revealed a boy of perhaps thirteen or fourteen years. His face was pale, and its troubled expression

indicated that his life had not been happy — at least not during the recent past. His clothing was old and in no condition to protect him from the cold air. Altogether, he would have attracted the sympathetic attention of persons whose hearts were even less tender than those of the relief expedition.

For a moment, he stood gazing at the quartette with an amazement equal to their own. Then, suddenly, a hoarse cry sounded within the house, and heavy footsteps crossing the uncarpeted floor betrayed the presence of another person inside.

The boy turned quickly, and glanced over his shoulder with a look of terror. Then, obeying a sudden impulse, he rushed across the piazza and leaped down beside Mr. Bruce.

At the same moment, a man flung open the door, and stepped outside. When he discovered the presence of the relief expedition, he stopped with an angry scowl and stared sullenly at them.

Just for a moment, he hesitated. Then, muttering some words that could not distinctly be heard, he strode toward them. The boy, meanwhile, had stepped behind Mr. Bruce, from which position of temporary refuge he watched the approach of the man with very evident dismay and dread.

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“Don’t let him get me!” he cried imploringly, and Mr. Bruce resolved that, come what might, he would strive to prevent such a thing from coming to pass. Stepping forward resolutely, he confronted the man, who, judging by his rough, untidy appearance, was either a tramp or a member of that portion of society which persists in living out of harmony with the rest of human beings.

“What are you doing here?” he asked sternly. “What do you want?”

“You let me get my hands on that there boy, and I’ll show you what I want!” was the insolent answer.

Clinton, Curtis, and Luther stepped close to the young fugitive, as if to act as a “buffer” and protect him from violence, and Mr. Bruce continued his diplomatic negotiations with the foreign powers.

“By what right do you exercise authority over this boy?”

“If you mean, what right have I got to keep him, I’ll just let you know that he belongs to me.”

“I don’t!” cried the boy in emphatic protest.

“You keep your mouth shut, or you’ll wish you hadn’t talked so much,” growled the tramp.

“You claim to have a legal right to this boy, and he denies it,” Mr. Bruce continued, striving to be just,

in spite of a strong temptation to favor the younger and weaker party in the dispute. "In fact, he wants to get away from you. I think the best way to settle the matter will be to step right down here to the police station in Dunstanburg, and let the law decide what shall be done."

"Laws ain't made for the likes o' me," sneered the tramp. "Get out of the way! This ain't none o' your business! What right have you got to come out here and butt in?"

He tried to push Mr. Bruce aside, but the instructor was too muscular an opponent to be intimidated.

"Careful, careful," he said quietly, with a warning gesture which shook off the hand that the man had laid upon his arm. "It will not be wise for you to use force. This boy has appealed to me for protection, and he shall have it until such time as the court settles the question of your guardianship. I shall take him back to the city with me, and see to it that he is lodged safely with the proper authorities. If you care to accompany him, of course it is your privilege to do so, but you must not attempt to touch him or to injure him in any way."

"And what if I don't go along with you?" the tramp asked in a surly tone.

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"Then you must consider that all power to control this boy is at an end."

"Oh! is that so? Well, we'll see about this power business!" cried the angry tramp. With this exclamation on his lips, he suddenly stepped backward a foot or two, then hurled himself upon Mr. Bruce with all the force he could command.

The instructor had suspected the tramp's intention even before he sprang forward. Years of experience on the football field, both as player and coach, had taught him the science of tackling an opponent promptly and effectively, and this training proved of great value in the present emergency since it enabled him, almost instinctively, to defend himself.

Hastily dropping his lantern, he braced himself for the shock. Then, seizing the tramp about the waist, he pinned his arms to his sides. The force of the attack carried both men off their feet, and they fell to the ground together, the tramp underneath.

The fall stunned the belligerent stranger, and forced most of the breath out of his body. He ceased to struggle, and, for a few seconds, lay quietly in the snow.

"Help Mr. Bruce!" Luther shouted excitedly, and the boys leaped to the aid of their instructor and



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friend. Their assistance, however, was not needed. As soon as he recovered sufficient breath to do it, the tramp sullenly admitted defeat and announced his willingness to surrender; so the imaginary swords which had leaped from their scabbards in defense of the relief expedition once more were sheathed.

The boys stood close to Mr. Bruce, who had risen to his feet and was brushing the snow from his clothing. In silence, they watched their defeated opponent as he struggled to his feet, but they were careful to keep between him and the boy whom he seemed so eager to capture.

"This thing is getting on my nerves," Luther remarked in a low tone to Curtis, who was standing next. "What under the sun are we going to do with him? I suppose the police —"

His sentence was rudely interrupted. Some one in the rear had given him a violent push, and, falling heavily against Curtis, Luther stumbled, lost his balance, and fell in a heap on the ground.

At the same instant, Clinton sounded an excited cry, "Catch him! Head him off! Don't let him escape!" and dashed away at top speed.

Then the others realized what had happened. The tramp, who seemed so weak and spent as he struggled

to his feet, had turned suddenly and given Luther a violent push. He had shrewdly seized upon a moment when Luther's attention was diverted, and now, under cover of the excitement which he had created, he had started away on the run toward the woods in the distance and the railroad tracks beyond.

Luther, standing nearest the man, had received the full force of this unexpected attack, although a generous share had been literally thrust upon Curtis. Clinton had narrowly escaped being mixed up in the tangle, and, with his usual presence of mind, had raised a cry of alarm and started in pursuit of the fleeing tramp.

Mr. Bruce hurried to reinforce Clinton's "flying squadron," while Luther slowly picked himself up and Curtis recovered from the shock of receiving in mid-winter a "tackle" which recalled sundry experiences on the gridiron during the fall campaign.

The tramp was straining every nerve to get beyond the circle of light cast by the lanterns. Once in the dark woods, he might hope to escape. Clinton, just behind, was determined to catch him before he reached the shelter of the trees. On — on they dashed, across the few rods of open space, and then, just before the

goal was reached, Clinton thrust out his hand and seized the tramp's coat.

With a furious exclamation, the man swung around and aimed a savage blow at his captor. There was enough light, fortunately, to enable Clinton to see his danger, and he ducked just in time to escape. This loosened his hold on the captive, and the tramp managed to wrench himself free. In a moment, he had disappeared among the trees, and Clinton could hear his footsteps now and then, as he stumbled over some obstruction or stepped upon a fallen branch.

"Let him go, Clinton," Mr. Bruce advised, as he reached the valiant warrior of the relief expedition. "Don't run any risks. He's an ugly fellow, and it will be better to let him get away than to expose yourself to any more danger."

Clinton drew a regretful sigh. "All right, Mr. Bruce," he responded, "but I wish I could have held on to him, all the same."

"I suppose you do, Clinton," the instructor agreed sympathetically, "and I glory in your spirit, but, after all, I think we are well rid of him. He might have made a good deal of trouble for us before we had turned him over to the police — which is the only dis-

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position we could have made of him. To be sure, this is a selfish way of looking at the matter. As good citizens, we ought to help the police in their efforts to rid Dunstanburg of all such undesirable persons, and the thought of personal convenience ought not to make us hesitate, still —”

He stopped with a little laugh, and Clinton completed the sentence. “When you’re tired and cold as an iceberg and all stirred up besides, it’s easier to think of what you want to do than of what you ought to do.”

“Exactly!” Mr. Bruce responded, and by this time they were back to the place where Curtis, Luther, and the stranger lad were waiting for them.

Clinton had recovered from the effects of the excitement while he and Mr. Bruce had been engaged in conversation, and now he realized that one hand still clutched something which had been in the pocket of the tramp’s coat. It was small and stiff and felt like the back of a pad or a piece of a box cover. There seemed to be some marks on the surface, but it was too dark to see at all clearly, and Clinton wisely decided that there had been enough excitement during the recent past to last for some time, hence it would be better to postpone his announcement of the unex-

pected seizure of this trophy of war. He dropped it into a convenient pocket in his overcoat, and said nothing about the matter.

"Did he get away?" Luther asked eagerly.

"Yes. I managed to grab him, but it was like picking up a wildcat by its neck," Clinton replied, and his disappointment and chagrin expressed itself in his tones. "He tore himself loose, and soon was out of sight among the trees. It was dark as tar in there."

"Too bad," Luther sighed. "I'd like to get my hands on him."

"So would I!" Curtis exclaimed, as he flexed his biceps and felt the hard lump with evident satisfaction.

"Perhaps some one else is inside the house, Mr. Bruce," Clinton suggested just then, as the thought occurred to him.

"I think our young friend here can tell us about that," the instructor responded, turning with a smile to the boy who had sought their protection.

"No, sir. No one is in there now," the boy declared. "There was another man with us, but he left some time ago, and hasn't come back yet."

Mr. Bruce was conscious of a feeling of surprise and perplexity, as he listened to the boy's reply. The language was not remarkable, nor was the message

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unexpected, but the tones of the young voice indicated refinement, and the distinct enunciation and correct choice of words made the connection between the boy and the tramp a matter of considerable mystery.

He was about to question the young stranger further, when Clinton remarked, "I suppose we ought not to leave the front door of this house unlocked. Yet I don't exactly see how we can fasten it, because the locks all are inside."

"If you want to, you can lock up the place, and then get out the way we got in," the boy announced eagerly. "I'll show you how to manage it."

Again, Mr. Bruce noted the clear, refined tone that seemed to proclaim gentle breeding, and he was inclined to believe that the boy could be trusted.

"Why, Clinton, I hardly think we need to fasten the front door," he replied after a moment's consideration, "although it was thoughtful of you to speak of it. We will just close it, and notify the real estate agents that tenants have occupied the premises for a time without paying rent. Perhaps they will want to collect the amount due."

"If they get it, it will be the most wonderful piece of work they ever did," Luther replied with a laugh.

"Well, we've had our share of excitement," Mr.

Bruce declared. "Now let's hurry back to school. It's much too cold a night to linger long in an exposed place like this."

The reference to the keen, wintry air reminded Clinton that the young stranger was thinly clad and probably was suffering from the cold. Quickly unbuttoning his long ulster, he wrapped one side of it around the boy.

"If we walk close together, this will do for us both," he said quietly. "It's a good thing that neither of us is very stout."

"Thank you," the boy replied gratefully, glancing shyly into Clinton's face, "but I'm afraid it'll make you cold if your coat covers us both."

As the boy spoke, Clinton noticed (as Mr. Bruce previously had observed) that his tone revealed a degree of refinement which one would not expect to find in the companion of such a man as the recent occupant of the house beyond the woods. He wondered what unkind circumstances had forced him into such a life, and felt a real eagerness to hear the story which he believed the young adventurer could tell.

"What's your name?" he inquired in a low tone.

"Charles Easton," was the prompt reply.

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"Well, Charlie, you seem to be having a hard time of it just now."

"Yes. Things have been going against us lately," he replied with a sigh. Then, after a moment of silence, he added more cheerfully, "My father always tells me that the tide must turn some time. It may keep on going out — out — out — until you think it'll never come back again, but by and by it flows in — higher — higher — higher all the time."

They were walking toward the road now. Mr. Bruce, with Luther and Curtis, led the procession, and Clinton with Charlie Easton followed a few yards behind. Clinton discovered that he was developing a lively interest in the boy who had been found under such unusual and truly sensational circumstances. While he was trying to frame a tactful question that would give him a little clearer insight into the boy's position, Charlie asked in a voice that faltered in spite of his effort to speak cheerfully:

"What are you going to do with me? Is there any place around here where I can stay to-night?"

"Well, I don't just know what we will do with you, Charlie," Clinton replied slowly, "but you can count on Mr. Bruce — he's that man with us — to do the very best thing for you."

"I suppose there are plenty of places where I might go if I had money to pay my way," Charlie continued, "but when a fellow gets broke, there isn't much that he can do."

"Don't you worry, Charlie. We'll take care of you somehow," Clinton declared resolutely, and with this assurance his young companion was comforted.

The party had reached the road now, and the trio in the lead waited for Clinton and Charlie to overtake them.

"Mr. Bruce, this is Charles Easton," Clinton announced. "Can't we take care of him in some way until he gets on his feet again?"

"Why, yes!" was the hearty response. "You must not think that I was neglecting you, Charlie, because I walked off and apparently paid no attention to you. I saw that Clinton Austin here had taken charge of you, and a boy always is well cared for when Clinton is with him."

"Are you blushing, Clint?" Curtis asked mischievously.

"The reason I walked away with Curtis and Luther, without saying anything to Charlie was just this," Mr. Bruce went on. "I had part of a plan for his benefit in mind, and wanted to work out the rest of

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it before telling him what we were prepared to do in his behalf. I knew that I should have plenty of time for quiet, uninterrupted thought with only Curtis and Luther for companions, so —”

“Why, Mr. Bruce! I didn’t think you’d knock quite as hard as that!” Curtis exclaimed reproachfully. “I know that I talked enough for a whole roomful of people, but I didn’t realize you wanted to think — really I didn’t. I’m sorry I disturbed you.”

“Oh, but you didn’t disturb me, Curtis,” the instructor protested merrily, “and I owe you and Luther an apology, which I make here and now. I heard you talking, but I went right on thinking and planning. I couldn’t tell you what you said if you offered me a house and lot for a premium.”

“O dear! And I said a lot of important things!” Luther murmured.

“For the present,” Mr. Bruce continued, “if Charlie cares to come out to St. Dunstan’s and live with us, we will try to help him over this hard place and give him a fresh start. What do you say to this proposition, Charlie? Are you willing to try us for a day or two until we decide what is the best course to follow?”

“Yes, sir!” was the prompt and grateful response.

“ You’re awfully good to stand by me this way. I don’t know how to thank you for all you’ve done, but I’ll be mighty glad to stay with you, as long as you’ve been kind enough to ask me.”

“ All right then! Column, right wheel! Forward, march!” Mr. Bruce cried with a martial flourish, and the party turned toward St. Dunstan’s.

CHAPTER VII

BACK AT ST. DUNSTAN'S

CLINTON and Charlie still walked together, sharing the protection of the ulster, which proved ample in size to cover two slender boys. Mr. Bruce and Curtis walked ahead, while Luther brought up in the rear of the procession. When space permitted, he joined Clinton and Charlie, but the sidewalk was not wide enough to allow this when people were passing, so he amused himself by dodging back and forth, thereby getting twice the normal amount of exercise out of the homeward march.

Now that the excitement attending the discovery of the tramp was passing, the members of the relief expedition found themselves thinking about the other party and wondering how it was faring with them and with Robert Arland, on whose account they had braved the wintry air. It must be confessed that their anxiety regarding their comrades was tempered with a lively curiosity concerning Charlie Easton, but the

undercurrent of apprehension and concern forced itself upon their thoughts more than was truly enjoyable.

"When we get back to school, we'll ask Charlie to tell us his story," Mr. Bruce said, after they had been on the homeward march for some minutes. "I know how eager we are to hear his adventures, but we can wait half an hour, I'm sure, for the sake of being comfortable while we listen to him. Out here in the cold, with people coming and going, we should have difficulty in following his remarks, and you know how annoying that is, especially when you are keenly anxious to hear every word."

"Yes," Curtis replied with a little laugh, "it's like having a fat man come into the theater right in the middle of an act, and try to squeeze past you, just as the villain draws his trusty blade and creeps up behind the hero."

"And what does the villain do to him, Curt?" Luther asked, with exaggerated interest.

"I couldn't see," was the guileless response. "The fat man was in the way."

"I'd like to know what Hal, and Wally, and Paul are doing," Clinton remarked, and there was a distinct trace of anxiety in his tone.

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"Yes, and Bob, too," Luther added. "I hope nothing serious has happened to them."

"Let's see, they started more than forty minutes before we did," Curtis observed thoughtfully, "and we must have been gone over an hour. Altogether, they've had more than two hours to find Bob and get back to school. Unless they traveled to Land's End on that freight train, I should think they might be resting peacefully in June Hall by this time."

"I see a telephone booth in that drug store over on the opposite corner," Mr. Bruce announced. "If you will excuse me for a few minutes, I'll find out whether any message from the boys has been received at the school office. We don't know whether to continue our search or to return home, and it won't take long to get into touch with headquarters. Then we can decide what ought to be done."

"We'll wait in this doorway, Mr. Bruce," Curtis informed him. "In there, we won't catch the full force of the wind."

Mr. Bruce nodded approvingly, and hurried across to the drug store, while the boys sought the place of shelter which Curtis had indicated. From this point, they could see the telephone booth near one of the large front windows.

They had encountered a number of people since leaving the shelter of the woods, and many of these good citizens of Dunstanburg had glanced curiously at the two boys wrapped in a single coat. They were accustomed to beholding unusual sights, however, when the boys from the school invaded the city, so the spectacle excited only passing interest.

"Let's see, Lute, weren't you saying this afternoon that life at St. Dunstan's had become so quiet that the still, small voice of conscience made a noise like a factory whistle?" Curtis asked, with a sly chuckle.

"Was it only this afternoon that I was complaining of the deadly dullness? My stars! It seems as if a week had passed since then—so much has happened! Well, I'm satisfied now, Curt. We've had enough excitement since we stopped at Mrs. Arland's door to make up for several weeks of the simple life."

"Isn't it funny how many adventures we fellows have had?" Clinton said reminiscently. "Ever since we entered St. Dunstan's, there's been one thing after another, and, somehow, we always seem to be right in the thick of it all."

"It began when Curt and I swiped the wooden Indian from in front of Schults's cigar store, and

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rigged it up over the entrance to the high school," Luther reminded them. "That was in the good old kid days, when we were young and gay."

"Toot-toot!" Clinton objected. "How extremely aged you have grown all at once. It was only a year ago last September that Dunstanburg was treated to the glorious vision of a wooden Indian perched beside Miss Education, over the high school entrance."

"We're not old in years," Luther explained with a comical air of grandfatherly condescension, "but in experience we're regular centurians, or centennials, or whatever it is you call 'em."

"Centipedes?" Curtis suggested helpfully.

Then he passed his hand over Luther's forehead, while he declaimed with dramatic fervor:

"'And when I place my hand upon his brow and feel the wrinkles there, left less by time than anxious care, I fear the world has sights of woe to knit the brows of manhood so.'"

"That's what they all say!" Luther retorted. "I wonder what's happened to Mr. Bruce. He must be having trouble in getting the school on the wire, or else he's giving them a full and complete report of our trip, revised and corrected, with footnotes."

"Here he comes!" Clinton interrupted. Then he uttered a cry of dismay, and added quickly, "I can't see his face, but he's heard bad news. You can tell that by the way he walks."

"It does look that way," Curtis agreed. "Perhaps we haven't seen the end of our adventure."

The boys left their shelter as soon as Mr. Bruce appeared, and hurried toward him with an eager chorus of questions and exclamations.

"Rob is back with his mother," Mr. Bruce reported. "He was pursued by a man who looked like a tramp, but escaped by climbing upon a flat car and then jumping off the other side while the freight train was moving slowly. He reached the school a few minutes after we left it, but he saw nothing of the searching-party, and no message from the boys has reached the office."

"That's funny!" Luther exclaimed. "According to the tracks in the snow, our fellows were right there when Bob hopped on the train. Why didn't he see them?"

"If he was being pursued, I imagine he had no eyes or ears for any one except his pursuer," Mr. Bruce suggested. "Then, when he jumped from the car, very probably he was breathless and frightened."

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It need not prove that our boys were not there because Rob failed to see them. Indeed, I am quite certain that they were on the train when Rob jumped off."

There was a brief interval of thoughtful silence. The report was so different from what had confidently been expected that the boys were overwhelmed with disappointment and anxiety.

Charlie Easton had said little since the homeward trip commenced, but now he ventured to break the silence.

"There were two tramps who went over to that house where you found me," he said diffidently. "And there was a boy who followed us and seemed to be hanging around the house. One of the men went out to see what he was after, and when we left he hadn't come back."

Luther whistled to express his surprise. "That accounts for the footprints of the man who was chasing Bob," he declared. "Bob evidently escaped all right, for he's home again now, but I don't see why this man didn't jump off the car after him, unless our fellows fixed him so he couldn't."

"That may be the reason why his pursuit ceased so abruptly, Luther," Mr. Bruce responded. "But

surely our boys would not be riding all this time. They would discover that Rob was not on the train, and would get off as soon as possible after that."

"What's the nearest place where the freight train would be likely to stop, Mr. Bruce?" Curtis wanted to know. "Where could the fellows get off?"

Mr. Bruce thought a moment, then replied, "About three miles north is a junction. The freight train would be almost certain to stop there."

"Well," Curtis continued, "suppose our fellows got on board at half-past six, and rode up to the junction. They'd take a few minutes to make sure that Bob wasn't on board. Say they left at seven and started back. It must be four miles from the junction to the school, isn't it, Mr. Bruce?"

"I should think so, Curtis. Certainly it would be as much as that if they followed the railroad tracks all the way back to the road, and then turned westward toward the school."

"Call it four miles," Curtis went on, "and allow 'em twenty minutes for each mile. You see, that would make them due at school just about this time. If they've been delayed, or lost the way, or something like that, they may not be back for an hour. I sort of feel in my bones that they're all right."

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"Better allow more than twenty minutes for a mile, Curt," Clinton suggested. "When we were tramping from Boston up to Camp St. Dunstan, we averaged between three and a half and four miles an hour, you remember. That was in broad daylight, on roads in much better shape than these are to-night, with all this snow and ice."

"Yes, and here's another thing," Luther added. "Those fellows must be about starved. They haven't had a bite to eat since noon, except a few crackers."

"They may have stopped along the road to get a meal," Mr. Bruce remarked. "I am trying to make myself believe that they did. Charlie has suggested that a companion of the tramp we encountered was the man who pursued Rob. Now then, since Rob escaped, you can see that this man must have been left on the train at the same time our boys were there. Was he a large man, Charlie — strong, and able to make trouble?"

"Yes, sir. Bigger than the one that's just escaped."

Mr. Bruce shook his head in a gesture of perplexity. "You can see that this fact suggests possibilities of danger for our fellows," he said. "If this man felt inclined to resent their interference, he may have

attacked them, or sought some other means of revenge."

"Our fellows could handle him, Mr. Bruce," Luther asserted reassuringly. "They wouldn't just stand still like hitching-posts and let that man sail into them."

"I agree with you, Luther," Mr. Bruce hastened to assure him. "I have abundant confidence in the courage of those three fellows. Still, I can imagine situations in which they would be almost helpless."

"It would take an awful jolt to put those fellows out of business," Luther declared, with unshaken confidence in the ability of his friends to defend themselves. "The worst of this thing is that we don't know what to do right now. We haven't the least idea where those fellows are, nor how to get into touch with 'em. I suppose the only thing for us to do is to go back to school and wait for something to turn up. What do you think, Mr. Bruce?"

"Why, I can suggest nothing better, Luther. To be sure, when one is anxious and perplexed as to his future course, it is easier to go around turning things up than to wait idly for them to turn up. We don't quite know what to do, and if we attempt to guess at methods of reaching the missing boys, we shall

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probably lose valuable time. It's twenty-five minutes of nine now, and in ten minutes, we can be back at school. Then, if any message comes from the boys, we shall be ready for immediate action."

They tried to be cheerful, as they continued on their way, and to persuade themselves that all would be well before many minutes more had passed. It was hard work, though, and anxious thoughts and vague misgivings persisted in forcing their way into the most hopeful theories they could devise.

It was about ten minutes of nine when they reached the school office, and here another disappointment awaited them. No word had been received from any member of the searching-party, so their friends were as much in the dark as ever regarding their location or the dangers which might be threatening them.

"Well, let's sit down a few minutes, anyhow," Luther suggested. "It's warm in here, and we need a chance to thaw out; and then —"

The telephone bell rang briskly just then, interrupting Luther's remarks. Mr. Bruce stood close to the instrument, so he turned quickly to receive the message. Suspecting that some news from the missing trio was about to be reported, the boys listened with eager interest, and a weight of anxiety was

lifted from their hearts as they perceived from the tones of Mr. Bruce's voice and from his words of glad response that their friends were safe. In less than a minute, he hung up the receiver and turned to the little group with an expression more cheerful than his face had worn for several hours.

"The boys have just reached Mrs. Arland's rooms," he reported. "They are hungry and tired, but otherwise in good condition. I understand that they have had a thrilling experience. Shall we go over?"

It was quite unnecessary to ask the question, for the boys already were on their feet, and they started with a rush for the door as soon as Mr. Bruce concluded his report. Nor was the instructor less eager, although long practice in the gentle art of self-control enabled him to preserve some measure of dignity as he followed his fellow-members of the relief expedition and the boy who so unexpectedly had been added to the company.

It took but a short time under any circumstances to go from the school office to the rooms of Mrs. Arland, Matron of St. Dunstan's, but it seems probable that a new record was made that night, as the relief expedition hastened toward a glad reunion with the searching-party.

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Harold, Wally, and Paul met them at the door, and for a few minutes every one talked at once. Questions, exclamations, and expressions of rejoicing came from each one, and when the boys paused for breath, no one had any clearer knowledge of what had happened than he had before, but this did not in the least disturb the happiness of the occasion. They were together again after a period of separation during which each group had been concerned for the welfare of the other. They had passed safely through danger and had reached a haven of peace and security. Their courage and mental alertness had been sorely tested and had proven equal to every emergency. Now danger was past; anxiety conquered; therefore, rejoicing was in order and joy was unconfined.

"I know that you boys must be cold and hungry," Mrs. Arland said, as soon as the babel of tongues quieted a little, "but if you will step over to the dining hall, I think we can find a remedy for these things."

"Yes'm! We were hungry some time ago, but we're 'way beyond that now," Harold confessed. "We're slowly starving!"

"I have plenty of hot soup for you to begin on," said Mrs. Arland, "and while you are eating that, I'll see what else the larder can furnish."

The boys needed no urging. By the time they had washed their hands and gathered around a table in the dining-hall, a maid appeared with the soup, and the busy tongues ceased to wag until the clamorous pangs of hunger had been satisfied. Mr. Bruce had talked a little with Charlie Easton as opportunity had been afforded, and had quietly assured him that he was to share the meal which the resourceful Matron had planned for the searching-party. There was ample provision, of course, for St. Dunstan hospitality was noted for its abundant quantity as much as for its wholesome quality, and so the relief expedition was glad to take a bit of solid refreshment, notwithstanding the fact that its members had eaten their evening meal only three hours previous.

Presently, Mrs. Arland entered the room and seated herself opposite Mr. Bruce at one end of the table, where she could look into the faces of the boys ranged along either side.

"Everything is ready now," she said. "I was expecting you earlier in the evening, and I knew that you would be hungry, so we made plans accordingly. I'll ring for Mary to bring in the things as soon as you have finished your soup."

"Yes'm! Please don't hurry, Mrs. Arland,"

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Wally begged. "We won't be through very soon."

"Don't hurry on my account," was the cheerful response. "There is more soup outside. I wanted to do my best for you boys who went without your supper and braved the cold and discomfort of a wintry night to search for my impulsive and thoughtless boy."

"Robert, my child, that means you!" cried the irrepressible Harold.

"Rob's curiosity and rash imprudence have brought him into trouble on past occasions," Mrs. Arland went on, "but as he grows older, I do hope he will learn wisdom and self-restraint. Certainly the knowledge that he has exposed his friends to real danger as well as to much discomfort and anxiety ought to make him more careful in the future."

"All that you say is quite true, Mrs. Arland," Mr. Bruce responded, "and yet, when you hear the full report of this eventful night, you will learn that we were able to rescue — not Rob, but another boy who needed our aid. Thus, on this occasion, we cannot escape the feeling that Rob has had a part to play no less important than any one else in this work of friendly service."

The presence of Charlie Easton among the members

of the relief expedition occasioned much curiosity, but Clinton, Curtis, and Luther, by means of sundry whispered explanations, had partially satisfied the interest of those who knew nothing of the manner of his addition to the ranks.

"It is kind of you to say so, Mr. Bruce," Mrs. Arland said gratefully, "and I hope that whenever Rob and I need friends we shall find those who will prove as loyal and considerate as you and the boys have been, on this as well as on past occasions. Yet it vexes me to think that you should have been exposed to peril as well as to much annoyance because of Rob's thoughtlessness."

"Robert Arland," Harold said in his most impressive manner, "you are accused of being thoughtless, reckless, curious, and generally good for nothing. What have you to say in defense of your outrageous conduct? We would hear your story, that perchance our hearts may be somewhat softened, so that the court may deal mercifully with you."

Rob's face was rosy with confusion and contrition, but he prefaced his report with a cheerful grin of amusement at Harold's words and manner.

"I didn't know anything about what you fellows were doing," he began. "Honestly, I didn't! If I'd

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known that you were going to look for me, I wouldn't have done what I did."

"In other words," Harold suggested, "if you had known what you now know, you would not have done as you did, but as you did not know what you now know, you had to do as you did."

"I — I guess so," Rob faltered. "You see, it was this way. I went down to the grocery store this afternoon to get some things for Mother. I ordered quite a lot, and carried a package or two along with me. There was a paper bag full of graham flour, but the other things I brought along were small enough to go into my coat pockets.

"When I left the grocery, I walked down to the freight house just above the railroad station to see if an express package for the school had come. It wasn't there. Well, if I'd come right home, I suppose there wouldn't have been any trouble, but I saw something at the freight house that stirred me all up."

"What was it, Bobby?" Luther wanted to know.

"It was two tramps and a fellow just about the size of this one here. It looked a lot like him, come to think of it, and I shouldn't wonder —"

"I was the fellow," Charlie admitted. "We were

down there at the freight house this afternoon."

There was a brief pause, broken by Harold, who said in a hoarse whisper:

"Hist! the plot thickens!"

Then Rob went on. "Well, now, isn't that funny? Let's see, what was I saying?"

"You weren't seeing what you were saying," Harold informed him. "You were saying what you had seen — two tramps and a boy down by the freight house."

"Oh, yes! Well, you see, I began to wonder what they were doing with this fellow. I thought maybe they'd captured him, or something like that, so I followed them. They started up the track, and I went back through the city and out along that street past the grocery store — the one that brings you across the railroad tracks and so on into the school road.

"When I came to the crossing, I saw the three of them quite a way up the tracks. They weren't walking between the rails, though! They seemed to be off to one side. I started to follow, but all at once they turned and crossed the tracks di — what do you call it? — slanting, I mean!"

"Diagonally?" Mr. Bruce suggested.

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"Yes, sir. That's it. They crossed diagonally toward the woods, and —"

"And when they turned, you stopped," Wally ventured.

"How do you know?"

"We followed your footprints in the snow, Rob. Do you remember that patch on your left rubber?"

"Yes. It's on the outer edge of the sole."

"That was what made it possible for us to follow you. We saw your footprints between the rails, and a few yards after you turned northward, you stopped for a few minutes."

"True enough, Wally!" Rob exclaimed. "I'll have to be extra careful after this. Mother's always telling me how the little things I do show what kind of fellow I am, but I never thought a patched rubber would let people know that I'd been standing on the railroad tracks."

"Well, as I said, the tramps crossed the tracks, and seemed to be making the boy go with them, so I was pretty sure that there was some kind of funny business about it. After they disappeared in the woods, I followed. They were out of sight by this time, but I could see by their tracks in the snow that they were making for that empty house. I kept after

them, because I was excited and didn't think of danger.

"When I came out of the woods, they were not to be seen, but there were noises inside the house, and I was pretty sure they were going to spend the night in there. I suppose I might have gone off and hunted up a policeman. If I had, there wouldn't have been any trouble. I didn't, though! I hung around, trying to find out what was going on, and wondering what I could do, and I suppose one of the tramps saw me.

"Anyhow, first thing I knew there was a yell at the door and I saw the old fellow making for me. I didn't stop to argue the question, and I guess I broke a lot of records getting through the woods. I slipped when I tried to get down the high bank, and then I thought he had me, for he was close behind. All this time, I had been clinging to that package of graham flour, and almost without thinking, I twisted around and threw it right in the tramp's face. Oh, say! You ought to have seen him!"

"We did!" Paul assured him.

"That's so! You were there. Well, 'down he went in a heap, and I got away as fast as I could. There was a freight train on the track, and I thought

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maybe I could climb over that and get away, so I hustled up to a flat car, climbed on board, and jumped off the other side.

“By this time, I was winded, and the sudden landing in the ditch by the side of the track shook me up a lot, so I just lay there for a while, and when I felt like getting up, the train was almost past me. I heard some noises, but didn’t know any of our fellows were around.

“I guess that’s all. The tramp wasn’t anywhere in sight, so I went back home, and here I am. There were some fellows walking over the campus when I came in, and I suppose it was the bunch that went with Mr. Bruce. I didn’t think that anybody’d be looking for me, though, so I kept right on without letting ’em know that I’d arrived on the scene.”

Rob thus brought his narrative to an abrupt conclusion, and there was a moment of silence. Then Harold announced:

“In consideration of your youth, and of the entertainment which you have furnished the court, we will make your sentence light. You are fined six gumdrops, of the variety known as ‘jaw-breakers.’”

There was a general laugh, and then Clinton said:

“Honorable judges, at the risk of being found

guilty of contempt of court, may I venture to suggest that your appearance would be vastly improved if you followed prevailing style and wore neckties and shoestrings?"

"That's right!" cried Wally. "We couldn't forget our sacrifice of shoestrings, because every time we stirred a foot, something reminded us of it; but really, there's been so much excitement that I'd forgotten all about not having on a necktie."

"So had I!" Harold admitted. "Don't you care. Our shirts are clean, and we don't mind how much of them we show. If only you knew what we used our neckties and shoestrings for, your sarcastic remarks would change to words of polite respect, and you'd be proud as anything if we so much as looked at you."

"Hear the rooster crow," Luther laughed. "You'd better tell us your adventures, Sir Harold the Great, or else we'll think this excursion of yours was just a picnic."

"Picnic!" Harold gasped, turning to Wally and Paul. "Picnic, Luther remarks! Ah — words fail me!"

"It's the first time they have," Clinton commented pointedly.

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"Oh, I don't mean that I can't talk," Harold hastened to assure him. "I mean that I haven't language to express my thoughts of any one who calls our thrilling, blood-curdling, hair-raising, shivers-up-and-down-your-spine adventure a picnic. Wait until you hear what happened."

Then Harold, assisted by Wally and Paul, related their experiences, telling of the sudden discovery of Rob as he fled from the tramp, of their pursuit, the brief battle with Peripatetic Philander, the ride in the coal car, and the long, cold walk back to St. Dunstan's.

"Well, you certainly had a hair-raising time," Curtis exclaimed when the tale was told. "I wish we had organized that Boy Scout patrol before all this excitement came. Then all that's happened could be credited to that. Even if we'd been veteran scouts, we couldn't have done any better to-night."

"Well, you fellows had your share of thrills, too," Harold remarked. "I'd like to hear what happened. Somebody else ought to do a little talking, just for a change. I've talked so much that my tongue's loose."

"Mr. Bruce was captain of the relief expedition," Luther observed, "so he ought to make the report."

"No indeed!" Mr. Bruce objected. "You led me into this adventure. You must explain it to the eager and attentive audience."

Urged by the others, Luther commenced the narrative, and explained how they had followed the trail to the edge of the woods, and had been perplexed because the searching-party had gone no further. Then he told of their discoveries along the railroad tracks, and of their resolve to follow Rob's trail through the woods. Here he stopped, and insisted that as the others had shared the experiences, they ought also to share in telling them, so Curtis went on with the story.

He told of their trip through the woods, of the discovery of Charlie Easton in the empty house, and of the exciting adventure with the tramp. Then he suggested that Clinton conclude the narrative, inasmuch as it was he who had pursued the fugitive.

Clinton spoke briefly of the thrilling pursuit, of the final escape, and of the return to St. Dunstan's, thus bringing the narrative to a conclusion. He did not refer to the piece of cardboard which had been in the tramp's pocket, and which had become a trophy of war. Indeed, in the excitement of the moment, he forgot all about it.

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By this time, the boys had satisfied their keen appetites, and the experiences of the several actors in the stirring events of the evening had been explained and woven into a single chronicle of dangers faced with courage and ready wit and of hardships endured with cheerfulness and good humor. The hour was late; the time for retiring was somewhat past, and Mr. Bruce was inclined to think that the assembly ought to adjourn and seek its several beds, but Harold interposed an objection to this course.

"Now, Mr. Bruce," he pleaded in his most persuasive tone, "you know that we all believe it's terribly unhealthy to go to bed right after a hearty meal. We'll all be sick if we seek our pallets of straw now. Besides, out of respect to Charlie, we ought not to separate before he has a chance to tell us how he came to be in the empty house."

Mr. Bruce raised his hands in a gesture of helplessness. "In the presence of such unanswerable logic, I have no choice but to surrender," he declared.

Surrounded by an atmosphere so friendly and homelike, Charlie's face gradually had lost its expression of apprehension and had grown quite cheerful. Also the substantial meal had ministered to his comfort, and he rejoiced at the sudden change in his

fortunes which had banished his foes and had brought him friends.

He told his story quietly, and with a trace of diffidence that made it appeal very strongly to the kind hearts of these boys whose lives had been sheltered and so full of certain privileges which Charlie had been denied.

Born in the sunny south, he had commenced life under favorable conditions, with parents who were proud of their boy and who hoped all good things for him. Then an unfortunate combination of circumstances involved his father in financial difficulties, and Mr. Easton, fearing that no opportunity of repairing his shattered fortune could be found in that district, traveled northward until he located an opportunity of engaging in business.

Here he remained until able to establish himself and to furnish a home for his wife and son, and they joined him in a northern city. It seemed now as if a time of peace and happiness was ahead of the little family, but soon it became apparent that Mrs. Easton could not endure the rigors and sudden changes of the climate, and it was necessary for her to return to the southern home.

The changes in arrangements, the disappointment,

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and the exposure to a northern winter proved too severe a shock to one whose health was never robust, and presently the time came when Charlie and his father were left alone.

Charlie had been attending a school in the south, and it was thought best for him to continue his course, although the boy would much have preferred to come north with his father. He never had liked the school, and after this experience, his dislike grew stronger. Finally, there came a disturbance in the routine of school life. A serious offense against the discipline and authority of the school had been committed, and the offender could not escape disgrace and punishment.

Although innocent, Charlie was accused of the misconduct, and his steadfast denials only strengthened the suspicion and distrust of the faculty. He had no friends near to whom he could turn for help, so, one night he quietly packed such of his possessions as would be required on the journey, and started north to seek his father, slipping away from the school without being discovered by any one.

Mr. Easton had been staying in New York City for some months, and thither Charlie directed his course, but his small capital soon was exhausted, and in order

to reach the city he was forced to sell nearly all his possessions.

Finally, the goal was reached, but here another disappointment awaited him. Mr. Easton's position made it necessary for him to visit different offices of the corporation by which he was employed, and a sudden emergency might call him unexpectedly from one city to another. Such a circumstance had arisen, and Charlie's father, supposing that his boy was safe and happy at school, had left for Montreal, where he was likely to remain for some time.

A person of more mature judgment and wider experience would have requested the office force to telegraph to Mr. Easton at Montreal, so that he might supply necessary funds for a journey thither, using the same speedy means that had brought the message. Charlie, however, was crushed and overwhelmed by repeated misfortunes, and bewildered as the thought took possession of him that he was friendless and alone in a great, busy city. Then, too, his pride kept him from revealing his helpless condition, and in the midst of the tumult of thoughts that crowded his brain was the fixed idea of getting to his father without asking assistance from any one. Hence, he left the office

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without revealing his identity, and wandered up-town towards the railroad terminals.

This independence of spirit kept him apart from the many agencies which exist in New York City for the relief of those in need. If he had made known his position, he might have been saved the trials which came later, but it still is true that "Pride goeth before destruction," and the case of Charlie Easton was no exception to the rule.

Drawn onward by his eager desire to reach his father, Charlie at length found himself in the freight yard of one of the great railroads running northward and westward. Here he was approached by two rough-looking men who professed a kindly interest in his affairs.

Although he shrank from any association with those whose appearance was so repulsive, his earnest longing to reach the far-away city overcame all other considerations, and he told them of his desire to travel and of his lack of funds for the journey.

Immediately, they informed him of a way to reach Montreal by rail without the formality of purchasing a ticket, and volunteered to go with him for at least a part of the distance.

Of course, he was grateful and eager to start, so

in the course of a few hours, the strangely-mixed trio started northward, traveling quite informally on a local freight.

By the time they had made a bewildering number of changes and finally had reached Dunstanburg, Charlie had made the discovery that his association with the two tramps was entirely for their benefit, and that little progress toward Montreal was being made. He wanted to get away from them, but was watched too closely for that, so nothing remained for him to do except to follow where his captors led, since, instead of being a voluntary associate and traveling companion of the unsavory pair, he really was their captive and drudge, forced to perform the tasks which were distasteful to them.

It had been the intention of the trio to travel northward from Dunstanburg on the freight that carried the searching-party and their prisoner up to the junction, but the sudden change in the weather made the tramps resolve to tarry in the house beyond the woods, which secluded place of refuge was known to many members of that class which lives at the expense of the more industrious.

Robert Arland's curiosity had led him close to their lodgings, where he had been discovered by one

of the tramps. Fearful that Rob might betray their presence to the police, this tramp had given chase in the hope of frightening the boy into silence.

The result of this pursuit, and the other events which followed, already were known to his auditors, so it was necessary for Charlie to add simply the information that in the absence of the first tramp and the relaxed vigilance of the second, he had sought an opportunity to escape, the unexpected success of which had amazed him.

“Well, Charlie, we are indeed glad that Rob’s curiosity, as his mother calls it, has resulted so fortunately,” Mr. Bruce said heartily, as Charlie concluded his story. “I think your troubles now are about over. We can call up the telegraph office and send a dispatch to your father, letting him know of your safe arrival. If you feel disposed to remain here at St. Dunstan’s, perhaps your father will be willing to grant his permission.”

“I hope he will!” Charlie exclaimed eagerly. “It certainly would be fine if I could stay here with you.”

* “You have had a very fortunate escape, Charlie,”

* The information about tramp life, and especially about the practice of impressing boys into service, is given upon the authority of Mr. James Forbes, Secretary of the National Association for the Prevention of Mendicancy. In “The Outlook”—

Mr. Bruce continued, speaking very seriously. "Perhaps you fellows do not realize it, but it is a fact, nevertheless, that the *genus* tramp would gradually become extinct with the passing of the years were it not for the recruits steadily added to the ranks. When you stop to consider that tramps are exposed to all kinds of weather, to railway accidents, hunger, and the inevitable results of dissipation, you will realize that the loss of life must be very great.

"In order to keep the ranks filled, and to make life easier for themselves, it is the custom of tramps to entice boys who for one cause or another are restless and eager to escape home restraints to go with them in quest of adventure. Once in the power of the tramp, it is difficult for a boy to escape. Gradually, he is forced to adopt the ways of tramp life, and to do the will of the particular tramp who has drawn him into this manner of living. In time, he becomes a full-fledged tramp, and perhaps impresses

issue of August 19, 1911 — Mr. Forbes contributes an article, entitled: "The Tramp; or, Caste in the Jungle." Herein, he makes a number of revelations concerning life in this portion of the underworld. Among the statements, is this: "Thousands of boys, some hardly out of knickerbockers, and in many instances mere children, are lured by tramps to the service of the road by wonderful stories of lemonade springs and rock-candy mines. Scarcely a railway town in the country does not mourn the loss of some bright, adventurous boy."

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some other boy into service, either by cunning craft, as in Charlie's case, or by force.

"So, you see how much has been accomplished by our work to-night."

"We were talking this afternoon about forming a patrol of Boy Scouts, Mr. Bruce," Harold announced. "According to Scout Law, 'A scout is a friend to all and a brother to every other scout.' If we do get our patrol started, I suggest that we make it our special business to stand by Charlie until his troubles are over and he gets settled again."

"That will be a worthy aim, Harold," was the hearty response, "but whether scouts or not, we can be the friends of those who need us. We shall have the spirit of a true-hearted Boy Scout if we can say honestly with one of our poets:

" 'I live for those who need me,
For those who need the truth,
For the heaven that smiles above me
And waits my coming, too;
For the wrong that needs resistance,
For the right that needs assistance,
For the future in the distance,
'And the good that I can do.' "

These words fell like a calm benediction after the excitement of the hours past, and the little company

separated for the night, well satisfied with past achievements, and fully prepared to meet with resolute courage such emergencies as the future might bring.

CHAPTER VIII

DOCTOR PRUNE DISCUSSES THE BOY SCOUT IDEA

NOW the scene changes! Imagine a room furnished like a library. Bookcases line the walls, except where broad, high windows break the regular arrangement. There are pictures, too, and other indications of the culture and good taste of the occupant.

Two persons are sitting in this room. One we recognize at once as Harold Chester. The other is a man whose gray hair marks the passing of years, although the clear, ruddy skin and the bright sparkle of the kind blue eyes indicate a vigor and virility which defies the approach of old age. This is Doctor Prune, Headmaster of St. Dunstan's School.

"And so you want to organize a patrol of the Boy Scouts of America," Doctor Prune was saying, as he gazed thoughtfully into space. "It is a most excellent organization, Harold, and I have abundant confidence in the men who are its leaders. Under proper supervision, I cannot see how any harm can come to a boy who chooses this means of developing

himself, and indeed, he is almost certain to receive beneficial training in many ways.

"I *can* see, though, how your request will lead to others. If your patrol succeeds, as I don't for a moment doubt that it will, considering those who will constitute its membership"—here Doctor Prune paused to smile humorously at Harold—"I predict that other students will want to form patrols. Hence, as there exists such probability of rapid growth, I think I shall have to talk the matter over with the teachers before giving you my permission. We have a faculty meeting to-morrow, you know."

"Yes, sir. We thought it would be fine, Doctor, if we could have a St. Dunstan Troop here, with a lot of patrols, and a scoutmaster like Mr. Bruce."

Doctor Prune's smile grew broader, as he replied with mock seriousness:

"What a delightful season of rest Mr. Bruce will have, Harold, when you and the other 'Crimson Ramblers' graduate. As long as you are here, he can hardly feel safe. He knows not what plan you may be forming to burden his leisure time with duties."

"I suppose he will feel relieved, Doctor Prune," Harold agreed good-naturedly. "He's been awfully good to us. We can never forget that tramp from

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Boston up to Camp St. Dunstan last summer, and then at camp we were with him a good deal, too. He's stood by us, and given us lots of good times, and helped us out of scrapes — like the one with Rockingham that I was mixed up in last fall. Oh, we're strong for Mr. Bruce, Doctor! No fellows could have a better friend."

"He is indeed a good friend, Harold, and I know how much he enjoys your fellowship, but as for undertaking to act as Scoutmaster for such patrols as may be organized here at St. Dunstan's — well, isn't that a good deal to ask?"

"Yes, sir, but he's the best one here for the place, as far as I can see, because he knows a lot about woodcraft, and first aid, and such things. Then he can handle the fellows so well, too! Oh, I hope he'll be willing to tackle it."

"Do you know of any other patrols in the city, Harold?"

"Yes, sir. There's one down town that's been organized quite a while. It's connected with the Dunstanburg Boys' Club. Buffalo Patrol, they call themselves."

Doctor Prune was silent a moment. Then he said:

"Are you in a hurry, Harold? Can you spare a

few minutes to hear a plan that I have been forming?"

Of course, Harold's ever-ready curiosity was immediately stirred, and he would have found time to listen to the Headmaster's plan, even if it had caused him inconvenience. As it happened, though, he could spare the time without difficulty, so he replied:

"Certainly, Doctor Prune. I have no engagement until study hour."

The Headmaster consulted his watch.

"That leaves us fifteen minutes," he said. "Harold, I can trust you to be outspoken, and to tell me what you think. Do you believe a high-class boarding school, like St. Dunstan's, encourages its students to consider themselves better than other boys who do not have such advantages? Does the spirit of exclusiveness, which is likely to become a part of the school atmosphere, make the boys unduly proud of their position in life? In other words, are we training our boys to be snobbish, either in spirit or in action?"

"Some fellows are born that way, Doctor," Harold replied promptly, "and of course, you can't help that. Because they have solid silver rattles to play with, they think they're a lot better off than other kids — I mean, other babies — who play with a few spools. Maybe they inherit it. I don't know about that, but

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I should think a fellow could inherit snobbishness as well as red hair and other things. Now, when such fellows go to school, they don't leave their silly airs home. They bring 'em along for exhibition. We've had such fellows here, and maybe there are some left. If a fellow starts that way, he may get his airs knocked out of him, and he may not. But honestly, Doctor, if a fellow isn't a snob when he comes to St. Dunstan's, I don't see how the school can make him one."

"Thank you, Harold. I am very glad to hear you say so. Recently, I have heard some rather savage criticisms of private schools because of the alleged fact that they train students to be snobbish in their ideas and practices. We have always tried to avoid this tendency at St. Dunstan's, and I have allowed myself to hope that we were not guilty of the offense charged in the indictment.

"I do admire that fraternal spirit of brotherhood which makes a boy or man the friend of all, rich or poor. Such a person is not in the least influenced by questions of social position. He sees through all such external matters to the real life beneath. He has that genuine spirit of chivalry which, so far as it regards class distinctions at all, does it in the spirit

of that fine French phrase *Noblesse oblige* — rank imposes obligation.

“The Boy Scouts of America aim to cultivate a spirit like that. Hence, it has seemed to me that if we allow our boys here at St. Dunstan’s to form scout patrols, it will have a tendency to check snobbish conduct, assuming that it does exist. Of course, our scouts will mingle with others in the vicinity. They will share the activities of patrols all over the country. Their outlook ought to become broader as their interests expand, and surely the scout training is calculated to make them more useful and self-reliant as they grow toward manhood, and to develop in them a higher and finer patriotism.”

“Yes, sir! It certainly will do all that!” Harold exclaimed with enthusiasm. “I’ve been reading a lot about the Boy Scouts, and everything I read makes me more keen to be a scout. I was wondering, though, as you spoke, Doctor, whether fellows here at St. Dunstan’s who are too top-lofty and full of airs would want to become scouts. They’ll think we’re just a bunch of kids playing soldier. It would punch a lot of dents in their dignity to put on a uniform and do something useful, and when you told them that they’d have to recognize some fellow in overalls as a brother-

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scout — why, they'd pretty nearly have conniption fits!"

Doctor Prune could not help laughing at the manner as well as at the classic English of Harold's comment, even though it revealed to him a possible element of failure in his plan.

"Perhaps you are right, Harold," he said after a short pause, "and yet, when you remember how strongly such boys are influenced by popular movements, and how eager they are to follow prevailing fashion and custom, I think you will see wherein my hope for them lies.

"I should have brought this matter before the faculty at the meeting to-morrow, even if your request had not come. Now we have a definite proposition on which to work, and I am glad you suggested the matter.

"As I have indicated, my plan is to work toward the formation of several patrols here. If the faculty think well of the idea, we shall encourage our boys to co-operate with others in the neighborhood in promoting scout activities."

"That will be fine, Doctor!" Harold declared. "The faculty generally agrees with you, so I can see where the St. Dunstan Troop will soon be added to

the others that have been formed all over the country."

"Well, I refuse to make predictions," the Headmaster responded, "but if we decide to follow the plan I have mentioned, you will have the honor of organizing the first patrol, and I am delighted to think that you 'Crimson Ramblers'—who have been Boy Scouts in spirit if not in fact—have decided to enroll in this organization. With such members, your patrol can hardly fail to prove strong and successful."

He rose and walked with Harold to the door, just as the clock in the tower overhead sounded the hour of evening study. Then they shook hands and parted—the restless, impulsive boy who was the loyal friend of the patient, kindly Headmaster; and the man who was close enough in spirit to the fires of youthful energy to admire the warm-hearted boy and to feel for him that degree of affection which may exist when a master and a student live in a spirit of sympathetic unity and mutual consideration.

After study hour that evening, Harold wrote a letter, about which he was careful to let no word of explanation escape. The next day, he notified those whom he had selected as members of St. Dunstan's first scout patrol that a meeting would be held in

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"Number 6, June," on Saturday afternoon. He felt so certain that permission to organize would be granted that he did not even delay his preparations until some more definite word should be received from the Headmaster.

Nor was he disappointed! The faculty, at its meeting, heartily approved Doctor Prune's suggestion, and Mr. Bruce allowed himself to be persuaded to act as Scoutmaster of St. Dunstan Troop. This news so greatly increased Harold's natural enthusiasm that his room-mate, Clinton Austin, was kept busy inventing safety-valves to provide such outlets as might keep the restless organizer in a condition approaching self-control until the great day of actual scout work arrived.

Of course, it came finally! No matter whether a future day is to be employed at a picnic or a dentist's office, it does come at the appointed time, nor can restless eagerness hasten it or shrinking reluctance to face its duties delay it.

Luther and Curtis lived in "Number 6, June." This room was used generally as a place of assembly when this particular group of boys desired to hold a conference. It was larger than the room which Harold and Clinton shared, and contained a window-seat,

which feature was lacking in the room where Wally lived with Matthew Hollister. Hence, its seating capacity was just sufficient for a group of six or eight, providing there was not too much restlessness (sometimes, there was, and critical observers might even have called it disorder).

The five boys who had been drawn together in such intimate fellowship ("The Crimson Ramblers") reached this room somewhat in advance of the others, and proceeded to discuss the new activities which membership in the scout patrol would present to them.

"We learn a lot of stuff here about English history, Latin, mathematics, and all such things," Harold complained, "but how much do we know about — well, about trees, for instance? How many trees can you fellows recognize at sight?"

"I know a whiffle-tree when I see one," Luther replied quickly, "and I can tell slippery elm by the taste."

"Oh, I don't mean that way! Suppose you were walking through the woods. Could you tell the difference between an oak and an elm, a maple and a birch, or a pine and a poplar?"

"I can tell an oak by the acorns under it," Luther

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responded, "and a pine by the needles. What more do you want?"

"You're doing well, Lute," Harold said in a tone of encouragement. "Honestly, I didn't think you knew as much as that. What I meant was that a school ought to train a fellow so that he'd feel at home in the fields and woods."

"And beside the babbling brook," Clinton added. "Don't leave that out, Hal. Whenever you speak of Nature, it's considered quite the thing to refer to it."

"Huh! Well, how could a school teach a fellow to be at home beside a babbling brook? It's too wet to be homelike."

"Maybe if the fellow could babble, too, he'd feel better," Wally suggested helpfully.

"You want too much for your money, Hal!" Curtis declared. "If a fellow had been brought up in a wigwam, or in a dugout, or something like that, maybe he'd feel perfectly at home in the fields and woods. If there were hornets in the front parlor, and snakes in the library, and mosquitoes in the kitchen, it would be all the same to him. But how can you expect a school to take a fellow who always has lived in the city—even a one-horse place like you live in—"

"What!" Harold and Clinton howled in one breath. "One-horse place! Why, it's the capital of New York State, and has five steam railroads, besides all the electric lines, and boats —"

"That's fine!" Wally commented. "Think of living in a place that has sixteen ways of escaping from it."

"You needn't talk, Mr. Cadwallader de Wrigglesby, of Boston, Massachusetts," Harold retorted. "Look at your own city, where the streets are so crooked that a motorman on a street car has to have a compass to help him navigate. Why —"

"Sic 'em, Fido!" cried a genial voice from the doorway, and the boys turned to discover Matthew Hollister standing there.

"Why, children, what a dreadful noise you are making!" he went on, in the moment of silence that followed his interruption. "Why can't you play quietly, like little ladies? What's the row about, anyhow?"

"Hal is trying to tell us that schools don't know how to teach," Curtis explained. "Instead of making us study Latin, and algebra, and all such stuff, he thinks we ought to be taught how to tell a pine tree from a birch. He says we ought to feel at home in the fields and woods."

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"We do!" Hollister declared. "That is, we do when we get there. I know an apple-tree when I see one, and I'm told there's a place about two miles from here where it pays to see them in season."

Just then, a knock sounded upon the door, and Paul Eaton arrived with the boy whom the relief expedition had discovered in the house beyond the woods. These two boys had grown quite chummy in the brief interval that had elapsed since that eventful night.

Charlie Easton's appearance had changed so completely during this short period that one who had seen him only on the night of his rescue would have found it difficult to identify him. Mr. Easton had agreed to allow Charlie to remain at St. Dunstan's, much to the boy's delight, and now, comfortably dressed and with all his troubles ended, he looked not unlike the other happy, contented students.

"I may as well give up," Harold declared with a sigh, when the new arrivals had been furnished with seats. "Of course, I could work myself to a shadow, trying to lift you fellows out of the mire of ignorance, but it wouldn't pay. You're happy, just as you are. Never mind! I'll learn all about woodcraft, and scoutcraft, and such things, and then you'll be as surprised as anything to find out how much I know."

"Oh, yes! We'll be surprised, all right!" Luther assured him, but Harold heeded not.

"It's time for the show to begin," Hollister reminded them. "What time does the curtain rise? I'm going skating at three o'clock."

"We'll commence just as soon as that always-reliable clock on the mantel strikes two."

"That clock!" Wally scoffed. "Why you can't tell by that whether the next meal will be dinner or supper."

"Here, here, I always stand up for my friends," Curtis declared in a reproachful tone, "and that clock certainly has been a good friend to Lute and me. We always use it to keep the door open when the wind is blowing. Twice, we've thrown it at cats that were attending choir rehearsal. It makes a dandy paper-weight. Heated, and wrapped in a blanket, it's a better hot water bottle than some of 'em, because it doesn't leak. We sometimes drive nails with it, and when we rub up the glass a little, it's as good as a mirror."

"Yes, but how about keeping time?" Charlie Easton wanted to know. "Isn't that what it was intended to do, in the first place?"

"Our clock always keeps time with music," Luther explained. "If it is running slow, Curt whistles

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‘Yankee Doodle’ until it catches up. If it’s too fast, I whistle Martin Luther’s hymn — *Ein feste Burg*, you know — one note a minute. It’s a simple method and pleasant to apply, and the clock always responds to this treatment.”

“Well, let’s all whistle ‘Yankee Doodle,’ ” Wally suggested, as he consulted his watch, “because the wonderful clock is six minutes slow.”

“Let’s all do nothing of the kind,” Luther remonstrated. “You don’t know the combination, and you’d get things all mixed up. We let it run that way on purpose. It has to be wound every eight days, and under ordinary conditions it loses a minute a day. When it gets eight minutes behind, I know that it’s time to get busy with the key, and the rest of the time I don’t have to bother my head about it.”

“Isn’t it wonderful what labor-saving inventions are produced these days?” Wally exclaimed. “Here’s a clock so delicately adjusted that it shows when the time comes to wind it. Marvelous, simply marvelous!”

Harold saw that conversation was drifting away from the channel in which he wished it kept, so he resolved to take prompt action.

“Oh, I suppose we can begin, if you children are

getting restless," he remarked. "How many of you would like to become Boy Scouts? All who would, hold up your hands!"

"How many hands?" Wally wanted to know.

"Make it three; there's luck in odd numbers!" was the prompt reply. "Ah, I see you all want to be scouts. We talked the matter over last week, and decided that our first patrol ought to be composed of fellows who could be counted on to live up to Scout Law. Our original 'Crimson Rambler' bunch gave us five to start with. You can't have more than eight in a patrol, so we began to hunt for three more fellows. Paul Eaton was willing to join, and then we thought of Hollister and Fullerton.

"Hollister, with his usual enthusiasm and good-nature — get up and bow to the gentleman, Hollister — agreed to come in with us. Fullerton is conditioned in one or two things, so he can't join any organization until he catches up with his school work, though I think he would like to be a scout if the powers that be would let him. I thought, as long as we had one vacancy left, it might be a good stunt to take in Charlie Easton, if he wants to come."

"He'll be taken in, all right, if you're bossing the job," Hollister declared. "Take warning, O would-

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be-scout Easton! Trust him not! His words are pleasant unto the ear, but his heart is full of guile."

"I'm not afraid!" Charlie protested. "I think it's mighty good of you fellows to ask me to join this first patrol that you're getting up, especially as I'm just a stranger here at school."

"It's because you are a stranger that you have been taken in," Hollister assured him. "Don't say that I didn't give you a chance to escape from the terrible fate that awaits you!"

"Well, how is it that you're willing to join, if it's so terrible?" Charlie wanted to know.

"Oh, I'm an old war-horse," laughed Hollister. "I can stand it, and I'm just joining to keep some fellow who might join in my place from enduring what I'll have to. Really, you don't know what a martyr I am just now."

"Don't mind him, Charlie," Wally said reassuringly. "Hollister and I live together, and I know that, when he talks this way, it means that his interest is up to a hundred and ten in the shade."

"No, I don't mind," Charlie assured them. "I'd like to join, really! When I look back to that night when you fellows found me, and think how things have changed since then, I can hardly realize that I'm

the same fellow. It seems as if the boy who scooted from that empty house must have been some one else."

"I congratulate you, Charlie!" Harold exclaimed. "Why, just think! If it hadn't been for what happened that night, you might never have known us."

"Whom to know is a liberal education," Clinton added impressively.

"Perhaps Charlie would be better pleased if he hadn't made our acquaintance," Wally suggested mischievously.

"He would not!" Harold protested indignantly. "Just think what a lonesome life he might have led down there near the Equator. He might have grown up, and graduated from school, and gone into business, and —"

"What kind of business?" Paul wanted to know. "As long as we're imagining, we may as well go into details a little."

"Why, let's see! Which would you prefer, Charlie, a peanut stand or a job as president of a college?"

"I guess he'd prefer to be let alone, only he's too polite to say so," Clinton observed.

"Oh, I don't mind," Charlie declared. "If a

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fellow is going to get upset over every little bit of nonsense, he doesn't belong with this crowd. I've found out that much. Besides, Harold is right in saying that I would have missed a lot if I hadn't met you fellows. Of course, I didn't live so very near the Equator, and it was my home, so I thought I was happy, and so I was until — until I found myself all alone at a school I didn't like. I never expected to be as happy again as I've been here at St. Dunstan's, and you fellows have been the best friends I've found in a long, long time. If I hadn't met you, I don't know where I'd have been now."

"You're getting to be quite a speechmaker, Charlie," Paul observed playfully. "First thing we know, you'll be addressing a meeting."

"Oh, no! I can't even address an envelope so that it looks real well," Charlie protested.

"Quick, Jane, the smelling salts!" gasped Harold.

Before they could be brought, a knock sounded upon the door — three sharp, carefully separated blows, followed by three more which were close together. Harold sprang forward and opened the door, revealing a boy of about sixteen dressed in the full uniform of a Boy Scout.

CHAPTER IX

BEAVER PATROL IS STARTED

THE stranger raised his right hand, the thumb resting upon the nail of the little finger, with the other fingers extended upward and together. This was the scout salute, and most of the boys inside the room recognized it as such.

“Gentlemen of the scout-patrol-that-is-to-be,” Harold announced, “it is a great honor to have with us for our organization meeting, Jack Radcliff, first-class scout and patrol leader of the Buffaloes. Don’t be bashful, children! Step right up and shake hands with the gentleman.”

Thus exhorted, the boys welcomed the distinguished visitor, each being introduced to him in turn. Jack was a student in Dunstanburg High School, and some of the embryo scouts had met him in connection with the planning and performance of certain athletic affairs of mutual interest. This fact helped to make him feel at home in the council chamber, and aided the other boys in regarding him, not only as an honored guest, but also as a friend.

“Well, how are you getting along with your

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patrol?" the visiting scout inquired, as he seated himself and faced the little group. "I had a letter from Harold Chester a few days ago, telling me that you intended to get together this afternoon and start your scout work. He kindly invited me to attend this meeting, and I'm delighted to come. Buffalo Patrol sends you its fraternal greetings and its best wishes for success."

"Thank you!" Harold responded heartily. "We appreciate your interest in us, and the kind message from your patrol. We've been talking for some time about joining the Boy Scouts. Most of us have read the Official Handbook, and are all worked up on the subject. Doctor Prune, our Headmaster, is willing to let us start. In fact, he's real enthusiastic over the idea, and would be glad to see more patrols formed here at St. Dunstan's. We have a scoutmaster, Mr. Bruce—I guess you've met him. All we have to do is to start. We thought you might be able to help us in getting started right."

"Why, I'm sure I shall be very glad to do anything I can," Jack declared. "Every scout is pleased to help the general work along, whenever he gets a chance. Have you selected a name yet?"

"No. We talked about it one afternoon, and con-

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sidered several, but couldn't agree on one. Let's see, we want a name that stands for activity, because there's something doing all the time when we are around. There's the busy bee and the busy beaver — why not call ourselves Beaver Patrol?"

"That's a good name," Wally agreed, "and the call is simple — you just slap your hands together. I thought of that one when I was studying the new scout book."

"Any one want to suggest some other name?" Harold asked.

No one did, so it was duly voted to form Beaver Patrol of St. Dunstan Troop, this being the second troop of Dunstanburg.

"One of you scouts ought to act as patrol leader," Jack suggested. "The scoutmaster can appoint him, or he may be elected by vote of the patrol."

"Mr. Bruce couldn't attend our meeting this afternoon," Harold explained, "but he said that he liked the idea of electing the patrol leader. He suggested that the fellow who received the most votes be the leader, and the one receiving the next highest vote be the assistant patrol leader."

"That's a good way to settle it," was Radcliff's comment, "because then there is no room for jealousy

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or any hard feeling, and nothing spoils a patrol quicker than those things.”

“If Radcliff will act as chief ballot clerk and inspector of election, we’ll be sure to have things done in good style,” Luther observed.

He found a pad on the study table, which furnished eight ballots, and these were duly distributed. There was a good deal of chaffing and banter while the vote was being taken, and each voter exaggerated the secrecy and mystery which he desired to throw around his exercise of suffrage.

Soon the ballots were ready. Then Jack collected them and began his inspection, while the embryo scouts pretended to wait in breathless eagerness for the announcement of results. It did not take long to examine eight ballots, and in a minute or two, Jack was on his feet with the report:

“Eight ballots cast: seven for Harold Chester, one for Clinton Austin. According to agreement, Harold Chester is declared elected patrol leader, and Clinton Austin assistant patrol leader of Beaver Patrol.”

“Get up and move to make it unanimous, Hal!” Luther urged in an audible whisper.

Then there were cries of, “Speech! Speech!” and

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enthusiastic applause as Harold rose to voice his gratitude.

“Fellow-scouts of Beaver Patrol,” he said, “I thank you for this demonstration of your sound judgment and good common sense. If I made any pledges before election, I don’t remember them, so you needn’t expect me to keep ’em. With such a crowd to handle as I now see before me, I realize that I’m going to have a hard time of it, but I’ll do my best. Angels can do no more. There are other things that I might say, but my well-known modesty keeps me silent. I wish Beaver Patrol all success, and if ever I think of some stunts you fellows can do to make it successful, I’ll let you know and see to it that you do ’em. Thanking you, one and all, for past favors, and trusting to be favored with a continuance of your esteemed patronage, I remain, yours respectfully, Harold Chester, P. L. of B. P., St. D. T., B. S. of A.”

Loud applause greeted the speech of the patrol leader, and a chorus of remarks, more or less complimentary in character, voiced the appreciation of his fellow-scouts. Then Clinton, urged by the others, rose to express his sense of obligation.

“I thank whoever voted for me for doing it,” he began. “I’m sorry that I haven’t the gift of elo-

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quence, like the former speaker, but I can say that I mean to work for the success of Beaver Patrol, no matter what position I may occupy. Perhaps I can best serve the patrol by looking after its leader and keeping him out of mischief. I've had considerable experience in that line, and I'll keep right on. Let's all work together to win!"

Then there was more applause. As soon as the boys were ready to proceed, Jack said:

"Each scout in a patrol has a number. The patrol leader is number one, the assistant patrol leader, two, and so on. Scouts generally work in pairs:—three and four together, five and six, seven and eight—that way."

Harold considered a moment. "In that case, we'd pair off like this," he said. "Lute and Curt, Wally and Matty, Paul and Charlie. Any of you fellows got any kicks to make about that arrangement?"

No one had, so the scouts were numbered in that order.

"Are you going to wear the regular uniform?" Jack asked.

"Sure thing! What's the use of being a scout if you can't dress up?"

"It's a good uniform," the visiting patrol leader re-

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plied, "and I expect you fellows'll look very dressy when you get your things.

"Well, now — let's see. You have a scoutmaster, a patrol leader and an assistant. You've picked out a name, and selected your scout numbers. Mr. Bruce will attend to the official part of your enrollment, and you can make arrangements about getting your equipment. The stores here don't keep the uniforms, but if we get a few more patrols going, I think maybe they will. However, you can get them easily enough from headquarters.

"It'll be a good thing if you each get a copy of the new Official Handbook. They cost only a quarter, and are worth about ten times that. You'll find everything there that you want to know about scouting in all its branches.

"I don't know of anything more that you can do just now. The next thing will be to qualify as tenderfeet. You know the conditions, I suppose. They're quite simple. Mr. Bruce will arrange a test for you as soon as you are ready, and if you pass, you will take the scout oath. Then you each can wear the tenderfoot badge."

"Then I suppose, after we're tenderfeet, we work on toward the second class," Clinton suggested.

"Yes, and that's not so easy. You're a pretty fair scout if you pass second-class tests."

"We had a hair-raising bit of scout work soon after the Christmas holidays," Harold remarked.

Then he gave Jack a brief account of their adventure on the night when they had sought Robert Arland, and had discovered so much that was unexpected and sensational.

"Well, I should say you had been stirring things up," Jack remarked in a tone of admiration, "and you certainly lived up to scout law in acting as you did. We've had one or two little adventures, but nothing as desperate as that, although we've been organized nearly a year. Of course, there's always more or less doing at the club, and some of the things have been — well, pretty interesting, but our patrol hasn't had anything very thrilling on its own hook."

"When we get fairly started, we'll work with you once in a while, if you'll let us," Luther promised. "I'll guarantee that things'll happen. I don't know why it is, but we always run into adventures of one sort or another. We seem to draw them, just as iron draws lightning. We're just an average crowd of fellows. Five of us have been together ever since we started here at St. Dunstan's. Paul ran across us at

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camp last summer. Hollister came into the charmed circle last term, and Charlie is our most raw recruit. He hasn't known us quite two weeks yet.

"Well, what I started to say is this: We don't go around looking for trouble, but we have had a lot of exciting times, and all these things that we've faced together have made us more intimate than the Siamese twins."

"Yes, I should think so!" Jack agreed. "Then, too, when a bunch of fellows go through danger together, it gives them the real scout spirit. I hope you Beavers will work with us, because when something big has to be tackled, it helps to have a whole crowd at work.

"We have a problem now that's bothering us. There's a crowd of fellows down our way that are determined to put us out of business if they can. Soon after we formed our patrol, we got after them and tried to help them to organize another, because we wanted to see the patrols increase, and then, too, we believed it would be a good thing for these fellows.

"We were so enthusiastic over the Boy Scout idea that we never thought of such a thing as having it turned down by any bunch of live fellows. Yet that's just what happened. These fellows didn't want to

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work. They weren't a bit interested in developing themselves along scout lines, and they were secretly making fun of our efforts to get 'em started. All they cared about was fun! I don't mean clean, harmless fun — of course, every fellow likes that. I mean rough-house, and wild disorder, and all kinds of mean stunts. That's what they wanted, and when they found out that the Boy Scouts were supposed to be in earnest in whatever work they tackled — why, they just refused to have anything to do with it.

“That was bad enough, but worse things followed. Instead of letting us alone after we found out that they couldn't be counted on, they tried to spoil our patrol. I don't know what their object was. We hadn't done anything to make them thirst for vengeance, and they didn't seem to have any special grudge against us. It looked just like a mean spirit, such as the dog in the manger showed in the fable. They wouldn't organize a patrol. They wouldn't let us work on friendly terms with them. Yet they wouldn't let our patrol alone, nor keep away from us.”

“That's a funny situation,” Luther commented. “They must have some object, Jack! Isn't there any jealousy, or some old grudge that might make 'em act that way?”

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The visitor shook his head. "It can't date back very far," he replied, "because these fellows haven't lived in the city long enough for that. You remember that automobile factory on the west side of the freight house, down by the railroad tracks?"

"Yes. It had only been running a month or two when we landed in these classic halls," Clinton replied.

"That's right! It opened a year ago last summer. They had a smaller factory further north, but came down here to get more room, as well as better accommodations and cheaper freight rates — so I was told. Well, what I started to say was that some of their best workmen moved down with the plant. They settled in some two-family houses that had been built near the factory, and there they are now — sort of a little colony.

"We're near enough to the district to be neighbors, and we thought it would be a good place to plant a scout patrol. However, we were mistaken! These fellows have tried right along to make us appear ridiculous. They're really an awful nuisance."

"Well, is it against you fellows, personally, that they're working?" Clinton asked. "I mean, are they down on you as human beings or as Boy Scouts?"

Jack thought a moment before replying. "It must

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be that they are against us because we're Boy Scouts," he decided, "because, as I said before, I don't think any of the Buffaloes ever did anything to make these fellows sore."

"This begins to look interesting," Clinton declared. "Here are a lot of fellows who come from afar and settle in our peaceful midst. Some of the natives try to be friendly and offer to help them organize a scout patrol. Did they turn you down at first, Jack, or make you think that they were going to fall right in with your plans?"

"We got the idea, somehow, that they were as much worked up as we had been over the chance to become scouts."

"I wasn't sure whether you mentioned that before, or not," Clinton responded. "Well — let's see! Here's this imported bunch. They're invited to become scouts. They pretend to be pleased with the idea at first, and keep up the bluff as long as possible. When their real position is discovered, they declare war on those who have tried to be their friends. Question: what's their object? They must have some reason!"

"Yes, so I should say," Luther agreed. "It's not likely that fellows would keep up a steady warfare that

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way unless they were trying to gain something by it."

"If their object was to prevent more patrols from forming, they have been pretty successful," Jack admitted. "They have formed a sort of organization which really is a burlesque on a scout patrol. They make everything about the work seem ridiculous. Honestly, some of the things they do would be really funny, only — well, we're loyal scouts and those things hurt."

Harold nodded sympathetically. "I can just imagine how sore such silly stunts would make a fellow feel," he responded, "but can't you do anything about it?"

"We've talked of having them arrested and put under bonds to keep the peace, but we'd rather not do that unless we have to. You see, we've hoped all along that more patrols would be organized, and then we'd be strong enough to frighten 'em into being decent. We've waited patiently for some time, hoping that such a result might come, and meanwhile we have tried not to pay too much attention to these fellows. We thought perhaps they'd get tired, or discouraged, or interested in something else, and give us a little peace. They haven't, though! They've kept so busy

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that no other fellows have had the courage to form patrols — at least, not in our neighborhood.”

“Then you have just kept on the defensive, as far as these fellows are concerned,” Wally suggested.

“Yes. We wanted to wait for reinforcements before declaring war on them. You see, if we had fought back with their own weapons, we wouldn’t have been living up to scout law, because we’d have been mixed up in a lot of scheming and mean tricks, done in a spirit of revenge. If we had undertaken to use force, it isn’t likely that the results would have been altogether satisfactory. I suppose it does look as if we had made door-mats of ourselves, and let those fellows walk over us, but our scoutmaster has advised us to be patient and wait for a good time to get back at them in some way that would make ’em feel genuine respect for the Boy Scouts.”

“Oh, well, you weren’t just submitting because you had no spirit,” Curtis protested. “You were doing it for the good of the Cause, and just trying to be patient until reinforcements came.”

“That’s it!” Jack exclaimed. “Somehow, we always have believed they would come, and then we meant to declare war, with everything honorable and above-board.”

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"War it is, then!" Harold announced. "Let the band strike up 'The Soldiers' Chorus.' My sword leaps from its scabbard to defend this stain upon our honor."

"I think the time has come," Jack responded, "because something serious has just happened."

"What is it?" the others chorused eagerly.

Jack hesitated a moment, and looked around the circle of faces, each wearing an expression of interest and expectancy.

"We want to keep this thing as quiet as we can," he said finally, "so I'll have to ask you to say nothing about it outside the patrol."

"That's all right!" Harold assured him.

"You'll think we're foolish to be so worked up over this thing," Jack remarked apologetically, "but we've stood a lot from these fellows, and this latest stunt is the very worst. This is what happened.

"You know, all the scouts in our Buffalo Patrol were members of the old Oak Street Boys' Club before it was consolidated with the D. B. C., and we're proud of the record. When the building that we were meeting in was burned down, we saved some of the wood that escaped the flames. We thought, considering the way we'd worked and all the history we'd

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made in that old house, it would be — well, sort of inspiring, you know, to have a reminder of it in our new building, if ever we had one.

“When we moved into the quarters of the Dunstanburg Boys’ Club, we took the pieces of wood with us. They were made into the cabinet that stands in the front office. I guess you’ve seen it. Just about this time, we formed our patrol, so we saved enough of the wood to make a pole about six feet long. On this, we fastened our Buffalo pennant, and so, you see, it really meant more to us than if it had been on just any old pole.

“Well, my story is getting pretty long, so I’ll cut out all the rest of the explanations, and come right to the exciting part. We use a room on the top floor of the club building for our patrol headquarters, and the flag always stood in a certain corner of this room. Two weeks ago last Monday, we had a grand pow-wow, and the pennant was all right. A week later, we met again, and the flag was gone.”

Jack paused to note the effect of this announcement. The Beavers were listening with flattering attention, and seemed to share his keen interest in the fate of this trophy which so appropriately linked the past with the present.

"But you said something about these fellows in connection with the matter," Wally reminded him. "Did they take it?"

"That's exactly what we'd give a heap to know," Jack declared with a gesture of perplexity. "We know that they have it, but we can't prove that they took it. In fact, as far as we know, none of those fellows came near the place between the meeting when we had the pennant and the next one, when we missed it."

"Is there any one in the club who might have helped them to get it?" Clinton asked.

Jack considered a moment, then replied positively, "I don't know of a single fellow who'd do such a thing, and I'm pretty well acquainted with the whole bunch."

"Well, why are you so sure the enemy has captured it?" Hollister wanted to know.

"Oh, they don't try to hide it! On the contrary, they take pains to show us that our colors are in their hands. Only yesterday, some of us were standing by a front window down at the club, and these fellows marched past with our flag. They were hooting and yelling to attract attention, so we couldn't miss seeing them. We rushed outside after them, but by that

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time they were a block away, running like all-possessed."

"Well, I wouldn't stand for that!" Luther declared savagely. "I'd do something! Can't you make them give it back?"

"We're willing to do anything reasonable to get hold of that pennant again," Jack declared, "but those fellows are shrewd. We haven't the faintest shadow of proof that they took it, so it wouldn't do to go as far as making an actual charge against them. They claim to have made a pennant exactly like ours, just to fool us, and I guess they did, too, for the mother of one of the fellows said that she had cut it out and stitched the letters on. You see how they've protected themselves. They can flash our pennant around to bother us, but if they are cornered, they can produce this imitation affair. We know that they have our flag and they know it, too."

"But do they know that you know it?" Harold suggested.

"I think they must," was the positive reply. "They're just doing it to bother us."

There was a moment of silence, while the boys gave more or less thoughtful consideration to the matter. Then Wally said:

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“Suppose we were in a fix like our brother-scouts, the Buffaloes; what would we do about it?”

“Get after the fellows who were bothering us and give 'em fifty-seven varieties of fits,” Harold responded promptly. “We'd hitch ourselves fast to their trails, using all our scout training, and never let up until we had 'em at our mercy. Then we'd try to convert them from the error of their ways, and teach 'em to sing ‘I Want to be an Angel.’ If they were too flinty-hearted for that, we'd give them such an awful idea of what would happen if they didn't quit bothering us that they'd be afraid to go home in the dark.”

“Hurray!” cried Hollister, springing to his feet. “‘You may fire when you are ready, Gridley,’ as Admiral Dewey once said. The smoke of battle will fill the air pretty soon, and we shall be slaying the bold foemen.”

“It can't begin too soon to suit us,” Jack assured them. “Things have reached a stage where we must take decided action, and the sooner we do it the better. Just as soon as we make up our minds what it's to be, I'll let you know. Perhaps you'd like to help.”

“There's no ‘perhaps’ about it!” Harold assured him heartily. “You can count on us to stand by

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you if there's any excitement in sight. The closer to it we get, the happier we'll be."

Jack smiled at the earnestness of the patrol leader of the Beavers, and hastened to express his appreciation.

"Are these fellows members of your club?" Curtis asked. "The ones that have been bothering you, I mean."

"Not now," Jack replied. "We got them in, soon after the bunch moved to Dunstanburg, but they lost interest after a while, in spite of all that we could do. Then they got to be a nuisance, and soon they dropped out. We weren't very sorry to see them go, either. They made a lot of trouble for us while they were in the ranks. All they really cared for was rough-house, and they were so crazy to be noticed and to show off that they did all kinds of foolish stunts."

"Fellows like that remind you of the old Persian proverb, 'The higher a monkey climbs, the more he shows his tail,' " Clinton remarked with a quiet chuckle.

"That's just right!" Jack agreed with a hearty laugh. "We tried to cure them by turning the gang into a Boy Scout patrol, but — well, you see how that plan has worked."

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He rose and reached for his hat. "I must be going!" he declared. "I came out here to help organize a scout patrol, and I've turned the affair into a regular long-distance talking meet. I hope you fellows won't have the trouble that's come our way. You have our very best wishes for lots of good times and for splendid success."

CHAPTER X

A CHALLENGE FROM THE ENEMY

HAROLD walked out into the hall with the visiting scout, and the meeting adjourned hastily.

As Clinton lifted his overcoat from its resting-place on a chair, something fell out of a pocket, and he stooped quickly to pick it up.

“Oh — I meant to show this to you fellows this afternoon,” he said, and the others gathered about him, peering with eager curiosity at the flat object which Clinton held out for inspection. “You remember the tramp we almost captured that night when we were looking for Bob Arland. Well, this thing was in his pocket. When he slipped out of my hands and got away, I found myself clinging to this as a drowning man clutches a life-preserver. I put it in my trunk when we came back to school, thinking that it would be a sort of souvenir of a thrilling adventure. I’d almost forgotten it, but this afternoon I ran across it, and thought perhaps you fellows who are good at puzzles might be able to understand

the thing. Can you make anything out of it?"

"It looks like a box-cover," Luther observed, "or maybe the back of a pad, and there's a diagram of some kind drawn on it. Do you suppose it's meant for the plan of a building?"

"It might be," Hollister responded, examining the card as Luther passed it to him. "If I were a builder, though, I'd hate to use a plan like that. I'm afraid the Building Department would get after me, and then the illustrious name of Hollister would get into the newspapers."

Jack had been looking at the drawing with mild curiosity, but now his interest was growing visibly stronger.

"When did you get this?" he asked finally.

"Why — er — let's see. When was it?" Clinton responded slowly. He consulted a calendar in his memorandum book, and, aided by the other members of the relief expedition, was able in a few minutes to announce the exact date.

"May I make a copy of that sketch?" Jack asked eagerly, and Clinton gave a ready consent. He was puzzled to account for the visitor's interest in this crude drawing, but Jack offered no explanation, and courtesy kept the others from asking questions.

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The whole party escorted patrol leader Radcliff to the school gates, and the souvenir of Clinton's encounter with the tramp was discussed freely on the way, but no one could explain the significance of the diagram, and Jack dropped no hint that disclosed the reason for his wish to preserve a copy of it.

Having seen their visitor started toward the city, the Beavers dispersed; some returning to "June Hall," some going to the gymnasium, and the others moving toward the river, where a number of students were gliding about on skates.

Nearly two weeks passed before the Beavers again heard from Jack Radcliff. They spoke of him on several occasions and wondered whether the pennant had been returned to the Buffaloes or was still being held by their enemies. Indeed, interest in the trials of their brother-scouts ran so high that Harold promised to seek permission from the school authorities on behalf of the Beavers to visit Jack's patrol.

Before he could arrange to do this, Jack called at the school one evening after study hour, when the boys were at liberty. The news of his arrival was passed rapidly from one to another, and soon the Beavers had gathered in "Number 6, June," to greet the visitor.

"I promised to let you know when anything turned up about that pennant," Jack began, "so most likely you've wondered what has been going on since the last time I saw you. The first important thing happened to-day, and I came right out here to tell you about it.

"What sort of proposition do you suppose those fellows have made to us?"

"It would be hard to say," Clinton responded. "Do they want to sue you for storage charges to cover the time they've kept the pennant?"

"Not quite as bad as that. Of course, they won't admit that they have the pennant, but they claim to know where it is. They tell us that they will give it back to us if we can make up a team of Boy Scouts that will beat their baseball team. What do you think of that proposition?"

"I think they have more nerve than celery tonic!" Harold declared indignantly. "The cheek of them! They'll give back something that you own already if you lick 'em in a baseball game. Well, that certainly does beat all!"

"It's a good sporting proposition!" Hollister observed. "Can you put a team in the field that'll knock the everlasting padding out of their bunch?"

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Jack looked a bit doubtful. "You see, they think the Buffaloes are the only Boy Scouts in Dunstanburg," he explained, "and we haven't a very good pitcher now, so they count on an easy victory. Dick Lester is about the best that we can put in the box, and he isn't as good as the pitcher that the other crowd would put up against him. I'll admit that much to you Beavers, though I wouldn't say so outside. Dick used to be a crackajack! He was captain of our baseball team, back in the days of the Oak Street Boys' Club, but since he's been in business, he doesn't have much time to practice. He might hold his own against an ordinary pitcher, but I'd be afraid to risk putting him up in a game such as these fellows want to play."

"Take Lute!" Curtis urged. "As long as he's a Boy Scout, there's nothing to prevent him from playing, and he's a wonder."

"Oh, get out!" Luther protested. "Curt, you're an old gas-bag. Don't listen to him, Jack. He used to be reliable, but since he was elected captain of the Junior football team last fall, he hasn't been responsible for what he says."

"My advice would be to let the whole thing alone!" Clinton said in the tone of one who has made up his

mind, and who, having done so, doesn't mind announcing the fact. "If those fellows haven't any more honor than to keep a pennant that doesn't belong to them (even if they didn't take it in the first place) they can't be counted on to play a straight, clean game. Besides, you can't trust them to return your pennant, even if you do win. I should say, the less you have to do with such a crowd the better."

"I feel that same way," Jack admitted.

"Your patrol is all right, so far," Clinton continued. "You simply have been the victims of a mean trick. I don't suppose those fellows dared to go as far as to steal your pennant, but, in some way, they got hold of it, and they're just keeping it to tease you. This baseball proposition is another part of their teasing program. They're going to keep that flag just beyond your reach and watch you try to get it. They're in almost the same position as a man who holds out a bone and makes a dog jump for it. When the dog jumps, the man moves the bone so that the dog will be sure to miss it. He gets all the fun, but the poor dog has nothing to show for his hard work.

"So far, you Buffaloes haven't given this other crowd much satisfaction," Clinton went on. "You've shown a whole lot of self-control, and I believe you'll

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win these fellows if your patience holds out long enough. I think it would be very undignified to step down from the position you've kept so long and bargain with them for the return of something that belongs to you and that they have no right to keep."

"Demosthenes is in good form to-night," Hollister commented mischievously. "Hit 'em again, Demos!"

"No, I'm through!" Clinton protested with a laugh. "I've said all I care to say just now."

"All that you say is true," Jack admitted promptly, "and our scoutmaster talks the same way, but he leaves the decision entirely in our hands. He puts it right up to us — says we must make up our own minds what to do. That part bothers us! If Mr. Brooks would come right out and say, 'Do so and so,' of course we'd do it, but when we have to work out the answer to the problem ourselves, it's a good bit harder."

"Well, what do the Buffaloes want to do?" Wally asked.

Jack seemed a bit embarrassed, but he squared his shoulders resolutely and replied, "We want to pick up the gauntlet those fellows have thrown down, and

win that baseball game by a score that will make the enemy look silly.”

“Hooray!” cried the vociferous Hollister. “‘We have met the enemy, and they are ours’ by a score of fifty to nothing. That’s the talk, Jack! In our combined patrols, we can make up a strong team, and I rather think that a certain pennant will roost at home after the game.”

“Let’s talk things over with Mr. Bruce before we do anything that we’ll regret later,” Clinton suggested, and the others welcomed the idea.

Soon they were passing along the hall toward the room of Scoutmaster Bruce.

“Come in!” he cried cheerily, as he opened the door in response to Harold’s knock. “Come right in! I thought you were coming, because I heard a noise out in the hall that sounded like a roll of distant thunder.”

Soon Mr. Bruce knew all that the scouts could tell him about the impudent proposition from the group in possession of the pennant of Buffalo Patrol.

“I’m inclined to agree with Clinton,” Mr. Bruce announced finally. “Yet, I’ll admit that all men wouldn’t take his view of the situation.”

“Clint isn’t a man!” Harold asserted. “He’s just

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a callow youth, a mere stripling, a beardless child. Why, I remember when he was in long dresses.”

“You’d better not say too much, Mr. Patrol Leader,” was Clinton’s good-natured retort. “Remember, I’m much older than you are. I was making mud pies while you still were shaking a rattle and looking foolish — a condition, by the way, which you never have outgrown.”

“Never mind these kind and gentle personal remarks,” Mr. Bruce hastened to interpose. “If you two scouts once get fairly started on that line of conversation, we won’t settle the more important matter before us.”

“Mr. Bruce, have you any idea why those fellows are working against the Buffaloes?” Wally ventured to ask, in an effort to turn the conversation into safer channels.

“There are several suggestions that I might offer,” Mr. Bruce replied. “Suppose a boy ties a tin can to a dog’s tail —”

“Why, Mr. Bruce!” Harold exclaimed. “Pardon me for interrupting, but can it be possible that there are boys as cruel as that? Dear me! What are the children of to-day coming to? We never thought of doing such things when I was young,” and he ended

with a deep sigh and a comical gesture of shocked horror which sent the others into a gale of merriment.

"I'm afraid there are some boys who still find pleasure in that ancient prank," Mr. Bruce responded, as soon as peace was restored. "Of course, no Boy Scout would do such a thing, because he has pledged himself to be kind to animals, but, until all boys become scouts, we cannot be sure that tin cans will not be found attached to the tails of unfortunate dogs.

"Well, as I said before, suppose a boy does tie a can to a dog's tail; what happens?"

"It's a sad tail," Harold responded with a mournful sigh, whereupon Hollister rolled him over on the couch and buried his head in a sofa pillow.

"Don't mind him, Mr. Bruce," Luther observed. "He's so stuck up because we elected him patrol leader that he feels unusually frisky whenever we're discussing scout doings."

"This is the point I am trying to make," Mr. Bruce went on. "If a boy teases a dog in the manner under discussion, and the animal runs away with the can bumping and banging behind him, the poor dog is likely to work himself into a perfect frenzy of excitement. This gives the boy great satisfaction, because

he has gained the desired result. The chances are strongly in favor of his trying the experiment again and again, as long as he gets similar results.

"On the other hand, if the dog turns upon his tormentor and defends himself aggressively the first time that a boy tries such a trick, you can imagine that he will stop to think twice before trying it again."

"Then you think, Mr. Bruce, that those fellows have been tying tin cans to the tails of the Buffaloes?" Wally asked.

Mr. Bruce laughed at this humorous interpretation of his remarks. Then he replied:

"Figuratively speaking, yes. It is quite possible that they feel no particular ill will toward the Buffaloes. In commencing their persecution, they may have had in mind nothing more serious than a desire to tease some person or group that seemed to furnish a convenient target for their abuse. This impulse, by the way, is by no means rare among boys."

"'Clang, clang goes the hammer on the anvil,'" Hollister cried. "That was an awful crack! Just look around and count the blushes."

"If we accept this theory," Mr. Bruce went on, "we suppose that these fellows believed that the new scouts would feel a bit self-conscious just at first, and

so they attempted to tease them. Perhaps there was no malice in their efforts when they began, but when they discovered that they really were annoying the Buffaloes, and that their campaign of persecution was preventing other patrols from being formed, probably they became more bold. Success encouraged them to continue, and to become more daring. I should think they would be tired of their efforts by this time. Perhaps there is a real desire for peace back of this challenge which we are discussing."

"That may be, Mr. Bruce," Jack agreed. "They've been very quiet this last month. I think they don't quite know what to do with the pennant, now that they have it. It's like a white elephant on their hands. They hardly dare to keep it, yet they won't come right out and give it back to us, for fear we'll claim a victory over them."

"It seems to me that this proposed game would be anything but pleasant," Mr. Bruce observed, shaking his head doubtfully in a gesture which lent emphasis to his words. "When two teams engage in friendly rivalry, striving for nothing but the honor of victory, it is good, clean sport, with lots of fun in it. If you take two groups of boys, between whom there is unfriendly feeling, and set them at work to

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win a game for the sake of some material reward, I can't see where the fun will be. Strife, bitterness, and personal enmity will make the diamond almost like a battlefield. Besides, I never did like the idea of what you fellows call 'playing for stakes.' There's a danger in it which you may not recognize now, but which is very real, nevertheless."

"Well, Mr. Bruce, our fellows feel this way," Jack explained in an apologetic tone. "We've talked the thing over and looked at all sides of it. Of course, we've been in the right, so far, and if we stick to our position, it'll be proper, and dignified, and all that. There's just one thing, though, that we can't forget. Those fellows have challenged us. If we don't accept it, they'll think we're afraid of them. If we pick up the gauntlet that they've thrown down, and give them an awful wallop at the game, we'll feel that accounts are squared. Really, it would give us a lot of satisfaction to win that game."

"Suppose you don't win," Paul suggested.

Jack shook his head. "We refuse to suppose anything of the kind," he replied. "If Luther will pitch, and all you Beavers will stand by us, I think our pennant will be safe."

"Oh, I'll pitch!" Luther promised, "and you can

count on this crowd to back you up in anything you do toward settling this matter."

And the others heartily endorsed this confident assurance.

"As long as your scoutmaster has left this matter in your hands, it is not becoming in me to offer advice," Mr. Bruce said thoughtfully, when a pause occurred. "If you will pardon one suggestion, though, I should like to speak a word of caution against an eager acceptance of this challenge, after the manner of a trout seizing a fly. If you think it wise to accept the offer of these boys, you certainly are in a position to make them give you the most favorable terms which you care to submit — favorable from your point of view, I mean.

"For instance, suppose you should agree to their proposition only on the condition that their annoyances were immediately to cease. Such an amendment, at least, would show them that you expect value received for every concession you make."

"Thank you, Mr. Bruce!" Jack replied. "That's a fine suggestion, and I'll be very glad to talk it over with the rest of the Buffaloes."

"It seems a little early to talk about baseball," Wally remarked. "The snow hasn't left us yet, al-

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though if it keeps as mild as the last few days have been, we won't see much of it by the end of the week."

"The hot spell has spoiled skating," Hollister complained. "Why, this weather makes you think of the summer vacation."

"We're going to have a change," Clinton predicted. "It was so mild and pleasant this afternoon that it looked like a 'weather breeder.' I think it will storm to-morrow."

"Oh, yes! Of course, you'd remind us of something pleasant to look forward to," Harold sighed. "You've no idea what a pessimist Clint is getting to be. I think it must be 'old age creeping on apace, uncheered by faith and'—soap. I look out of the window and say, 'Isn't it great to see the sun shining so brightly?' 'Yes,' says he, 'but it's drawing water. It'll rain to-morrow; just see if it doesn't.'"

"Then it does rain, and when it clears off, I say, 'Well, the storm's over. The sun is coming out again.' And Clint says, 'In that case, I suppose our wall-paper will be faded worse than it is now.'"

"Oh, he's a great trial to my tender nervous system. You've noticed lately how melancholy I've been, haven't you?"

"Why, no! I can't say that I have," Paul gasped in surprise. Harold happened to be looking directly at him, so he felt that the responsibility of answering the question rested upon his shoulders.

"That's good! I've tried bravely to conceal it. I've been cheerful before people. But alas! Also alackaday! My harp is hanging on a weeping willow tree, and my heart is bowed down by weight of woe, just like the old song says."

"Oh, come off!" Clinton laughed. "If you're going to be the patrol leader of the Beavers, they'll expect you to quit stretching facts for the sake of being funny — or trying to be."

"I surrender!" Harold cried. "But really, Clint, you *are* getting awfully in the habit of looking on the dark side of things. Far be it from me to make personal remarks, but I just want to remind you that a Boy Scout is supposed to be cheerful. I'll try to set you a good example in that part of the program, even though I may fall down somewhere else."

"You fellows certainly do have a good time out here at St. Dunstan's," Jack observed with a little laugh. "I'm real glad you've formed a scout patrol, because it gives me a dandy excuse to come out for a visit now and then."

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“Come often, Jack!” Mr. Bruce exclaimed with genuine cordiality. “You always may feel sure of a welcome.”

“Thank you, Mr. Bruce!” the visiting patrol leader exclaimed gratefully. “I have stayed now a good deal longer than I meant to, so I’ll have to say a hurried ‘good night’ and start back toward town.”

As he spoke, Jack put on his overcoat and seized his cap. The hour was so close to bed-time that no one detained him, and soon peace settled upon St. Dunstan’s — a peace quite foreign to the place during the busy hours of the day.

Now “the war-drum throbbed no longer, and the battle-flag was furled.” Some of the Beavers may have dreamed of sensational baseball games, in which the enemy was defeated with great slaughter, but their dreams did not prevent them from getting a full measure of rest, and thus were they storing up strength against an hour when demands should be made upon it on behalf of the Cause which now claimed their loyal devotion.

CHAPTER XI

CAPTAIN LUTHER DISCUSSES BASEBALL

“RING out the new, ring in the old, as Tennyson didn’t say,” Curtis remarked with a little laugh. He had just entered his room in Junior Hall, and had discovered Luther in the act of hanging his scout uniform in the wardrobe. On the bed, a battle-scarred baseball suit had been flung, and Luther’s eyes turned toward it as his roommate spoke.

“That just expresses it, Curt!” Luther agreed. “You must have a streak of poetry in you somewhere. Graceful phrases fall from your lips like — like —”

“Bricks from a shaky chimney,” Curtis suggested helpfully, as he drew off his sweater and laid a pile of books on the study table. “There’s plenty of room in me for streaks of several things, Lute, but I guess you’ll have to leave poetry out. Maybe I ought to blush when I say it, but if you want to know the truth I’ll own up to preferring Mother Goose to Keats or Browning or some of those other fellows who are supposed to belong among the highbrows.”

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Luther raised his hands in a gesture of horror, although he could not altogether conceal an expression of amusement as he exclaimed, "O that these ears of mine should have heard such a confession! Curt, your literary taste certainly needs a tonic."

"Never mind about my literary taste," Curtis retorted good-humoredly. "What means this sight that smites my surprised gaze? The snow hasn't been gone long enough to bring out those people who go daffy over the what-do-you-call-'ems — the spring flowers, you know. Trailing arbutus and such things. Yet, here you are getting out your armor and preparing for the baseball season. Aren't you rushing things, Captain Hamilton?"

(Luther had been elected captain of the Junior Baseball Team at a meeting held during the conclusion of the preceding season.)

"Work starts to-morrow, Curt," was the reply, and the happy ring in Luther's voice spoke eloquently of his pleasure at the prospect of getting into active training again. "Of course, it's much too cold and sloppy to get out-of-doors, but all the candidates have been asked to report at the gym to-morrow afternoon."

"Fine! Fine!" Curtis commented approvingly.

“Nothing like starting things ahead of time. It’s a good thing that St. Dunstan’s is closed during the summer. Otherwise, football practice might start on the Fourth of July. In that case, I see my finish! No, thank you! Much as I like the game, I think I’d resign from the squad if we had to work when the temperature was ’way up out of sight.”

“Don’t be too sure of your safety,” Luther warned him. “You may get summer football before you finish here —”

“The technical term is ‘graduate,’” Curtis interrupted with frigid dignity.

“Oh — er — beg pardon! I should have said ere you terminate your educational course at St. Dunstan’s. But really, Curt, haven’t you heard of camps where the football squad is coached through the summer? It must be a good thing, because a lot of the first-class camps have taken it up, so, sooner or later, it’ll strike Camp St. Dunstan. Then where’ll you be?”

“Down and out!” Curtis groaned, seating himself comfortably while Luther critically inspected his somewhat worn baseball suit. “Oh, well! Let’s not borrow trouble. I’ll cross my fingers every time I think of it, and wish *hard* that the idea won’t strike the

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Camp Council favorably. How do things look to your practised eye, Cap?"

Luther smiled contentedly. "Fine! Couldn't be better, Curt! As far as I can see, the Juniors are going to have the strongest team they've put into the field in several years."

"Awfully weak on the pitching end, though," Curtis commented playfully.

(Luther was considered the best pitcher in the Junior squad, and the 'varsity team was watching him with longing eyes, looking forward to the day when he should be a Senior, and eligible to membership in their select fellowship.)

"Now you're knocking," Luther replied serenely. "Besides, you're 'way off. We have a new man coming out for pitcher and they say he's a wonder. Of course, when I was elected captain, I knew that I'd have to use some of the other pitchers in nearly all of the games. Who ever heard of a captain who pitched every time?"

"It isn't often done, that's a fact," Curtis agreed, "but say, Lute, you know as well as I do that the pitcher gets a big slice of glory when a game is won, and I don't know of any fellow in the squad who can pitch as well as —"

"Oh, come off!" Luther begged. "You'll make me blush, and, at this season, I can't pretend that it's sunburn."

Curtis smothered a smile and replied quickly, "You flatter yourself unduly, Captain Hamilton. I was about to say that I didn't know of any fellow in the squad who can pitch as well as a National League pitcher."

Luther laughed and seated himself opposite his room-mate. "You're an old fraud, Curt!" he exclaimed playfully. Then he looked down at the carpet in some diffidence, and the expression of his countenance changed slowly. In place of the merry, mischievous appearance, a look of intense earnestness and determination possessed his features.

"Curt," he said presently, and all traces of his former bantering tone had vanished, "it opened my eyes a lot last fall when you were elected captain of the Junior football team. You and I are so chummy that I can say things to you without being misunderstood. You know what we were when we started here at St. Dunstan's. You were a good-natured, happy-go-lucky fellow, who had no more idea of shouldering responsibilities than if they never had been invented."

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Curtis nodded, but did not interrupt.

"And as for me — well, the only responsibilities I thought of were mixed up in some fun that would put the illustrious name of Hamilton on the wrong side of school records.

"When you were boosted into the place Raymond left vacant, you acted like Atlas with the world on his shoulders. You sat up five minutes later each night to plan things for your team, and you even woke up before the rising-bell rang, so as to do a little extra worrying."

"Well, things did look kind of wabbly once or twice," Curtis urged defensively.

"So they did," Luther agreed, "but the point I'm trying to make is that you took the position so seriously. Why, Curt, I don't believe you ever in your life settled down to anything in such a do-or-die, sink-or-swim, survive-or-perish spirit."

"It did take an awful grip on me," Curtis acknowledged.

"Yes, and all this was going on right before my eyes, so, of course, it couldn't help having its effect on me. When I was elected captain of the Baseball Juniors, I made up my mind to tackle things just as earnestly as you did last fall.

“Once I would have grabbed the position and used it as a way of showing off. I’d have wanted to be captain and pitcher, too, so’s to be right in the lime-light. If any glory had gone past me, it would have been an accident. You’ve shown me, Curt, that the captain of a team is the man who has to sacrifice the most for the sake of the others and of the school. Of course, he ought to be willing to do this, but, believe me, it’s no easy thing!”

“Right-o!” Curtis exclaimed fervently. “It’s hard — hard enough to crack nuts on!”

“Well, Curt, we’ve shown ’em what one of us can do, and I’ve made up my mind to keep on with the good work, even if it pierces my tender heart until it looks like a porous plaster. I’m going to let Harper and Stubbs pitch, unless this new man proves to be the wonder they say he is. I’ll swallow my own feelings for the sake of the team, and take a place somewhere in the infield — second, most likely.”

“Who’s the new man?” Curtis wanted to know.

“His name is Waters, and he comes from some place in the Jersey suburbs.”

“Waters — hm-m-m! He ought to be a good pitcher. His name suggests it.”

“Stop your knocking! He’ll have a fair trial, of

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course, and I hope he will prove a real 'find.' He's just entered here at St. Dunstan's — came at the beginning of the winter term, so I haven't seen much of him, but I've heard from some of our fellows that he's all right."

"Aren't you going to pitch at all, Lute?" Curtis's tone showed that he was not altogether pleased with Luther's modest withdrawal in favor of aspiring team-mates.

"I *would* like to pitch against Dunstanburg High," Luther admitted regretfully. "They ran away from us last year, you remember, when they began to score."

"Well, that wasn't your fault, Lute. You pitched a good game, but the team seemed to go to pieces, all at once. The support was rank."

Luther shook his head in protest. "I walked three men when we needed strike-outs," he said reminiscently. "I guess I got rattled some. That's why I'm anxious to get back at them and show what I can do. I don't enjoy getting licked by any one, naturally, but it just makes me sore to be walked over by a mean bunch, like the team they had last year. They just rubbed it in all the time, until I felt like declaring war on them."

Curtis laughed at this belligerent declaration. "But I don't just catch what you're driving at, Lute," he replied. "Of course, your complimentary remarks about my work with the football team touch my heart. I accept them with becoming modesty. If you noticed, you probably saw me blush several times. But about this pitching business — do you really think you can do more for the team in some other position?"

"As captain — yes!" was Luther's prompt reply. "A captain ought to be in a position where he can watch everything that's going on. A pitcher can't do this very well. I'd rather pitch than do anything else, but, for the sake of the team, I've decided to let somebody else tackle the job this season."

Curtis nodded. "I see! I know just how you feel, Lute, and I'm glad you've made up your mind to do this thing, even if it is hard."

"You and I have worked together so often, Curt, that I think we can get up a list of signals without much trouble," Luther said, after a brief silence. "It'll come in handy for these other fellows."

"That's right!" Curtis agreed heartily. "Let's draw up a complete list, and make two or three copies

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of it. Then we'll feel as if we were actually at work in the baseball campaign."

He tossed a pad on the table, and Luther produced his fountain pen. The next half-hour was spent in consultation, with results recorded on the pad. Finally, Luther gathered up the sheets and dropped a book on top to serve as a paper weight.

"There, that's done!" he exclaimed. "We always tackle business before pleasure, Curt, so the next thing on the program is a visit to the library. We've got to look up a lot of references for that historical essay."

"Pleasure, says you!" Curtis groaned. "Say, just find it and introduce me to it."

Nevertheless, he went with Luther to the library, where some time was spent in consulting books of reference, making notes, and discussing plans for the forthcoming essays. Presently, the work was completed, and they started back toward their room. Just outside the library door, they met Franklin Harper, one of the possible pitchers, and Luther invited him to come upstairs and be presented with a full and complete edition of pitching signals.

Most of these he already knew, but, being quite willing to refresh his memory and to do all in his

power to improve his pitching record, he joined Luther and Curtis, and the trio walked slowly up the broad stairway, eagerly discussing baseball prospects.

“Now here’s a list that Curt and I made out this afternoon,” Luther said, as he stepped toward the table. “I think you’ll find it —”

He stopped suddenly with an exclamation of surprise. Everything upon the table appeared to be just as he had left it, but the lists of signals had disappeared as completely as if they never had existed.

CHAPTER XII

THE SEVENTH DAUGHTER OF A SEVENTH DAUGHTER

“GONE!” Luther exclaimed, turning in surprise toward his companions. “Well, wouldn’t that bump you?”

“I see where the Beavers will have a chance to do some scout work,” Curtis remarked, after a moment of silence, during which each boy looked quickly about the room in search of anything that might reveal the identity of the unknown intruder. “Let’s hunt up Hal and the others, and see what they have to say about it.”

“Can you tell whether anything on the table has been moved?” Harper wanted to know. “Do you remember just how you left the books and things?”

“Why, we didn’t take any special notice of them,” Curtis replied slowly, “but you can see that nothing has been mussed up. It looks to me as if some one had slipped in here, grabbed the papers, and sneaked out again, without touching anything else.”

"But who would be likely to do it? They wouldn't be of any earthly use to a fellow here at St. Dunstan's."

Luther shrugged his shoulders. "No, of course not!" he agreed, "but, all the same, I don't like the looks of it."

"Perhaps some fellow came in to see us while we were down in the library," Curtis suggested. "The room was empty, and it would have been easy to swipe the signals, you know. Maybe it's only a joke, after all."

"Well, let's hunt up the other Beavers," Luther urged. "Come on, Harper! We'll make believe that you belong to our patrol until we get this thing straightened out."

In the meantime, while this annoying incident was being duly considered by those most intimately affected thereby, the two members of Beaver Patrol who excelled their fellow-scouts in mischievous devices were planning a practical joke, of which Captain Luther was to be the victim.

"Are you in here, Hal?" Hollister's head and shoulders were thrust through the partly-open doorway. "Ah, yes! I see you are. No, don't bother

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to answer my question. I insist that you shall save yourself this labor."

He entered the room which Harold and Clinton shared, carefully closed the door, and seated himself comfortably in Clinton's vacant chair.

"Come in, won't you?" Harold exclaimed humorously. "I'm not at home, but you can sit down and wait for me."

"Thanks!" laughed Hollister. "When do you expect to be ready for company?"

"Not for six months," was the hasty reply. "I've gone to Europe."

"Well, you'd better hustle back. There's something doing," and Hollister winked mysteriously.

"What? Where?"

"Oh, never mind! You're in Europe."

"I've come back," Harold announced. "I came by wireless, so's to get here in a hurry. What's doing, Matty?"

Hollister grinned mischievously. "Say, Hal, do you know Madam Zanzelini?" he asked mysteriously.

Harold looked surprised. "Madam Zan — zan — who?"

"Madam Zanzelini!" Hollister's voice lingered impressively on each syllable. "Greatest seeress and

fortune teller in the world. Seventh daughter of a seventh daughter. Reads the future like an open book for the small sum of twenty-five cents. Terms strictly cash in advance."

"Oh, is she the gypsy who tells fortunes?"

"Yes, there's a band of them in town now — or rather, just outside the city limits — and the Madam's been doing a land office business. Dunstanburg, you know, isn't very generously supplied with fortune tellers, so she's had the field all to herself. She's done one or two rather clever things, and a good deal of free advertising has come her way. Now here's the deep and awful plot,"—Hollister lowered his voice to a hoarse whisper—"Next Saturday night, Madam Zanzelini is coming to St. Dunstan's."

"I see her!" scoffed Harold. "Oh, yes! I can just shut my eyes and see the faculty and a brass band marching out to meet her. 'Madam Zanzelini,' says the Doctor, 'we bid you welcome to St. Dunstan's!' 'My thanks, kind sir,' she replies in broken tones. 'The future opens before me, and I can see that you are going to have oatmeal for breakfast.'"

But Hollister's smile grew broader and he shook his head. "Of course, she can't come — not in the flesh, anyhow. Faculty's too hippy, and she's too

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busy. She's going to be here in spirit, though. For a while on Saturday night, I'm to be Madam Zanzelini."

"You!" Harold exclaimed jeeringly. "You look about as much like a gypsy fortune teller as a cow does."

"Wait until you see me in costume," Hollister advised. "I'm the speaking image of the Madam."

"She must look like a freak!" Harold observed mockingly.

"Now you're getting personal," Hollister retorted with undisturbed good-nature. "The show is for Captain Luther's special benefit. Seems to me I didn't tell you that before."

"How's that? Where does Lute come in?"

Hollister slowly closed one eye, and assumed a look of mysterious wisdom.

"Captain Luther's too happy," he replied with a grin. "In this dark vale of tears, it doesn't do to look for blue sky all the time. Once in a while, you find 'thunder heads' rolling together, unless there's something the matter with your eyes. Madam Zanzelini sees trouble ahead for our gay and gallant captain."

"What under the sun are you driving at, Matty?"

Harold asked, knitting his brow in perplexity. "I don't get the combination."

"Why, it's just this way, Hal. Lute has an idea that his bunch of baseball hopefuls is the most brilliant lot of stars that ever have blinked in the St. Dunstan sky. I'd like to give him a stiff jolt. It would be heaps of fun, and besides I think it would do him good."

"Oh, yes!" Harold agreed virtuously. "We must consider the dear child's welfare above everything else. If we have a chance to do him good, nothing must get in the way until we finish."

Hollister nodded. "I knew I could count on you, Hal!" he exclaimed. "Now, this is the plan. You remember the school play last winter? Well, I wasn't here then, but I've heard lots about it. There was a gypsy fortune teller in it, and I've found out that the costume is poked away in the storeroom with a lot of other things. Saturday night, I'm to be Madam Zanzelini. I'll take possession of a vacant classroom over in the school building, and your part of the program will be to steer Lute into the room, so that I can tell his fortune. If the other fellows want to come, of course that'll be all right, but I'm gunning for Lute in particular. I have a perfectly

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ripping future all mapped out for his bunch of stars. Honestly, Hal, I've draped the season in so much gloom that you couldn't find a bright spot with a microscope."

Harold laughed gleefully. "That'll be swell, Matty!" he declared. "I tell you, it takes our Matty to get up these little — er — what shall we call 'em?"

"Diversions," Hollister prompted. "Pleasant interruptions of the dull routine of school life. Isn't that a scholarly way to put it? I don't believe Doctor Prune could improve on that so's to notice it."

"We'd better keep it dark for a while, hadn't we?" Harold asked, and Hollister nodded a vigorous assent.

"Only the Beavers are to be admitted into Madam Zanzelini's audience chamber," he said, "and it'll be lots more fun if only you and I know who 'she' is. Maybe we'll tell the others later, but if many are in the secret now, I'm afraid Lute'll catch on.

"Now that I've attended to this important business, I'll tell you what I really came for," Hollister continued. "I'd like to borrow Clint's Latin notebook. We were arguing about a translation down in the library this afternoon, and if we have the book, the point can be settled in just about two minutes."

"Certainly," Harold agreed cordially. "I'll lend you anything belonging to Clint. Look over there in the window, Matty. The sash was rattling last night, so I grabbed the first thing that came handy, and stuffed it into the crack."

Hollister walked over for a brief investigation. "No, that isn't it," he reported. "That's one of your old notebooks."

"In that case, I'll take it out," Harold declared, springing to his feet. "I'm willing to sacrifice a heap for my beloved alma-mater-that-is-to-be, but when it comes to giving up a book on which I have spent countless hours of — of —"

"Unremitting toil," Hollister suggested.

"Thanks! Countless hours of unremitting toil — that's just about the size of it, Matty. I notice that it hasn't remitted anything so far. Ah! here we are!"

Harold had been searching among the books and papers on the study table as he spoke. Now he held up the desired book and passed it across to Hollister.

"There you are, my brave fellow-scout," he remarked. "Much good may it do you! Let's go down and find Clint, so that we can have it out with

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him. We can't spend much time in arguing the matter, for it's nearly time to eat, and far be it from us to let anything interfere with that important duty.

"That reminds me, Matty! I'll have an awful job to appear calm when I get into the dining hall. It won't do to let the other Beavers suspect that anything special is in sight, but, with this Madam Zanzelini business in my system, I don't see how I'll be able to settle down."

"I expect it will just about choke you, Hal, but every good cause has its martyrs. You can be a Boy Scout martyr. Let's see! I don't think any special emblem is awarded to scouts who suffer for the Cause by keeping still, but I should think there might be. Two lips fastened with a padlock would make a good one. How about it, Hal?"

"Fine and dandy!" Harold cheerfully responded. "But say, let's get a wiggle on and move nearer to the shrine of — of — who was the patron saint of eating, anyhow, Matty?"

"Probably Childs or Dennett," Hollister suggested, and they started toward the door.

Before they reached it, rapid footsteps sounded in the hall outside, and Luther, with Curtis and Frank-

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lin Harper, appeared in the doorway just as Harold swung open the door.

"Hello, fellow-Beavers!" Luther exclaimed. "You're just the ones I wanted to see. I've got a bit of scout work on hand."

"Don't tell me that you've struck another mystery!" Harold responded. "Why, the air's been so thick with 'em this term that you couldn't see more'n ten yards ahead — on a very dark night."

Luther nodded. "This is a real, genuine, double-barrelled mystery," he said excitedly, as he paced restlessly about the room. "Curt and I had a baseball discussion this afternoon, and we agree that it'll be better for the team if I don't pitch this year."

"A very wise decision," Harold commented mischievously. "Now the team can get a *good* pitcher."

"We've got Harper and Stubbs," Luther went on, paying no attention to the interruption, "and there's a new fellow coming out. His name is Waters, and he comes from Jersey —"

"He's a long way from home," Hollister sighed. "When does the mystery appear on the scene?"

"I'm coming to it," Luther assured them, "and you would have known all about it by this time if it hadn't been for these impolite interruptions."

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Both Harold and Hollister pretended to feel duly rebuked, and Luther continued without suffering any further disturbance.

"Curt and I have worked together in so many games that we know the signals like a book. In order to help these three fellows that I've just mentioned, we wrote out three sets of signals. We left them on the table in our room and laid a book on top. Then we went down to the library to hunt up some references. We met Harper down there, and asked him to come back with us and get a set of the signals we'd written out. All three of us came upstairs together, but when we walked into the room, the signals weren't there."

"I knew it!" Hollister declared. "About the ending of the third chapter, I could tell how Lute's story would end. Were they all gone, Lute, every sheet?"

"Yes, there wasn't a scrap left."

"Room mussed up at all?"

"Not a bit. Everything was just as we had left it. Even the book that we had laid on the sheets was right there on the table, and you wouldn't have known that it had been touched if you hadn't missed the papers that were underneath."

Hollister whistled softly. "Do you suspect anybody?" he asked after a moment of silence.

"Why, no!" Luther declared. "I'm absolutely at sea. I can't see what object any one would have in taking them."

"Well now, let's see! What would Sherlock Holmes do in such a case?" Harold asked briskly. "He'd get a magnifying glass and a tape measure, most likely, and go over the floor in that room, looking for footprints. We might try that scheme, I suppose. It won't cost us anything. Who has a glass?"

"I have one down in my room," Harper announced eagerly. "I'll hustle down and get it," and he hurried off on his mission.

"Lute," Harold said in a confidential tone as Harper disappeared, "it isn't generally known among the fellows, I believe, but Madam Zanzelini is coming here Saturday night."

"Madam Zan — *who?*"

"Surely you have heard of the great Madam Zanzelini, seventh daughter of a seventh daughter, one of the greatest fortune tellers of the country."

"And she's coming here to St. Dunstan's on Saturday night?"

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"So Hollister says."

Luther looked incredulous, but Hollister nodded impressively. "Keep it dark, Lute," he urged. "We don't want the report to get around among the fellows."

"Now, according to the papers," Harold went on, "Madam Zanzelini has done wonderful work in locating missing things. If I were you, Lute, I'd ask her where those signals went."

"Oh, stuff and nonsense!" Luther scoffed. "I don't believe in this fortune-telling business."

"That may all be," Harold retorted, "but probably you've never had any experience with this remarkable seeress. Believe me, she must be a wonder! I'm going to ask her about it, if you won't."

"Go ahead!" Luther urged cordially. "Don't let me stand in your way. It'll be lots cheaper for me if you consult the Madam, and I'll get the report just the same."

"Miser!" Harold cried scornfully, a little disconcerted by Luther's lack of interest. "I won't tell you a word about it, so there now! You're big enough to do your own consulting, and —"

Just then, Harper returned with the glass, and the conversation had to be turned into other channels.

Harold seized a tape-measure that hung on his chiffonier, and the whole party adjourned hastily to the room occupied by Luther and Curtis.

Here they made a careful investigation, but found nothing to indicate the manner in which the sheets had disappeared from the room, or to reveal the identity of the person or persons responsible for removing them.

"It beats me!" Curtis declared. "Shall we say anything about it outside? Do you want any other fellows to know of it?"

"Let's keep it quiet until—until after Saturday night," Harold urged, with a glance full of meaning in Luther's direction. "I sort of feel in my bones that we'll pick up something by that time."

"Agreed!" Hollister exclaimed. "We can count on you, I suppose, Harper, to keep this thing from leaking."

"Oh, yes!" Harper responded good-naturedly. "I won't give out any interviews to the press until you tell me that the time for talking has come. Mum's the word!"

"We can do a whole lot of thinking, even if we do keep still," Curtis observed. "I don't like to have a thing like that happening right here. It's a mighty

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unpleasant feeling that you carry around with you when you are suspecting somebody that you don't know of crooked work. The scouts here in Dunstanburg seem to be hoodooed. Buffalo Patrol lost its pennant mysteriously, and now we have some baseball signals swiped —"

"Maybe not," Harper interposed. "I don't like to think that any fellow deliberately swiped them. It may be a joke, you know, or perhaps — well, I don't just know what explanation to give, but I think we'd better not accuse any one of helping himself to them."

"I suppose they just hopped down from the table and walked out," Curtis retorted scornfully.

"Well, I believe we'll know more about it by Saturday night," Hollister declared, gazing intently into space, as if he were establishing thought communication with the mythical Madam Zanzelini. "If I hear anything before that time, I'll tell you about it, Curt."

There was a little more discussion of the perplexing circumstance, but the boys were utterly at a loss to furnish a satisfactory explanation of the affair, and they separated just before the signal for supper sounded, with a vague feeling that the baseball season was to be as full of excitement as the last football season had been.

Saturday night arrived finally. The missing sheets had not been returned to either Luther or Curtis, and no clue had been discovered by any of the vigilant watchers that promised to throw light on the puzzling affair.

In the early evening, Harold called for Luther, and reminded him that this was his golden opportunity to consult Madam Zanzelini. Curtis was full of curiosity, and urged his room-mate to interview the seeress. Indeed, Curtis was eager to behold the possessor of such unusual powers, and declared his intention of visiting her audience chamber. Luther scoffed at the idea for a while, but finally consented to join the others, and the three Beavers started for the vacant classroom where the Madam was giving demonstrations of her ability to read the past, present, and future of those who consulted her.

The room was dimly lighted. A single cluster of electric bulbs near the ceiling cast a shadowy, spectral light over the desks and other articles of classroom equipment. A screen had been placed in one corner, and on a table just behind it, two candles were burning. Madam Zanzelini sat back of the candles, and their flickering light revealed her gaily-colored costume, but partially concealed her face.

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Luther hesitated near the door. Harold feared that he was contemplating flight, so he hastened to whisper:

“Brace up, Lute! There’s nothing to be afraid of. Shall I go first, or do you want the honor?”

“Oh, I may as well plunge in and have it over with,” Luther replied, raising his hands in a gesture of helpless resignation. “Lead me to the sacrifice!”

Accordingly, Harold assumed as much gravity as he could, and led the unwilling victim before Hollister, who now was posing as “the queen of fortune tellers.”

Madam Zanzelini seized Luther’s hand and bent over it eagerly, while her gilt ornaments tinkled musically.

“You come from the West,” she announced, and her voice had a queer, foreign accent, “but not the far West. Ah, Chicago! Yes, that is it! I see trouble here. Yes — you have been to other schools before this one. Two — three — yes, this is the third. Here is military life, but not much of it. I see! One of these schools had the — what you call it? — the drill with the guns, but you were not there long.”

By this time, Luther was visibly impressed, and was



"YOU HAVE BEEN TO OTHER SCHOOLS BEFORE THIS ONE."—Page 204.

following the words of the seeress with fascinated attention.

“You care not so much for the books as the sports,” the Madam went on, after the fashion of one who finds it difficult to clothe thoughts in proper English. “All sports you like, but here is one that you prefer above all the rest. It is — ah, yes! — baseball! This game you play much and in it you do well. Here is a change — a move up. You are now the commander — how you say? — the captain.”

Here Madam Zanzelini showed signs of agitation. The hand which held Luther’s trembled a little, and there was a note of alarm in the tones of the gypsy as she continued:

“You look for the victory. You think it will come, but take warning. There is trouble ahead — strife — confusion. You must work! Early and late you must think always of the company — what you call it? — the team. I see success, but only after much work and trouble. Others will work with you, but you must lead, and if you give up, all will be lost.”

She stopped abruptly and released Luther’s hand. “Perhaps there is some question the young gentleman would like to ask?” she ventured timidly.

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“ Oh — er — why I lost some — ah — some papers a few days ago,” Luther stammered. “ Do you know — that is, can you tell me where they are? ”

Madam Zanzelini leaned back and closed her eyes, while she murmured some words which the boys could not understand.

“ I hear a sound like the rushing of waters,” she said finally, and just then some one opened the door of the classroom.

With a muttered exclamation of impatience, Harold turned to see who the intruder might be.

“ Ah, Harold,” said a familiar voice, “ I was passing along the hall, and wondered why the classroom was lighted to-night. Surely you are not indulging in an extra study period,” and Doctor Prune, the Headmaster of St. Dunstan’s, stepped inside the room and closed the door behind him.

CHAPTER XIII

THE SIGNALS ARE LOCATED

“**O**H — er — why, good evening, Doctor!” Harold stammered. The interruption had come so suddenly and had been so entirely unexpected that Harold’s usual self-possession quite deserted him, and the confusion of helpless embarrassment held him in its grip.

Madam Zanzelini came to the rescue. “It is, the Doctor, then,” she said, rising and making a queer kind of courtesy. “The grand professor! Will the gentleman have the future revealed to him? Even the gypsy may know some of those things that books tell not.”

Doctor Prune gasped. In the course of his long service at St. Dunstan’s, he had faced very many different experiences, but here was a situation absolutely unparalleled. What was this bold gypsy doing at the school, and how far were these boys responsible for her appearance?

While these questions were flashing through his mind, Harold recovered from his momentary panic.

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"Doctor Prune," he said in a low tone, "if you don't mind stepping out into the hall, I'll explain the whole thing to you."

"Why not here and now?" the Headmaster demanded sternly. He was convinced that these boys, whom he had learned to trust, had been guilty of a grave indiscretion, and a feeling of disappointment in their "fall from grace" mingled with his displeasure. He was determined to settle the matter at once.

"If you please, Doctor, I can tell you about it out there a good deal better than I can here. Really, sir, I think you won't mind about Madam Zanzelini being here when you know all the facts."

Harold's tone was full of persuasive pleading, and the Headmaster hesitated. Harold had won a place in the Doctor's heart, so he felt strongly inclined to grant the earnest petition. Besides, the schoolmaster of two generations learns which boys may be trusted to the utmost limit, and Doctor Prune's confidence in Harold, though somewhat shaken just in this moment of sudden shock, still was strong enough to win the point which the boy was trying to make.

"Since you feel so positive that our conference had better be held elsewhere, I will go with you, Harold," Doctor Prune announced, after a moment of thought,

"but I must request the boys in this room to wait here until our return."

The Headmaster led the way across the hall to a deserted classroom, touched the button that controlled a cluster of electric lights near the ceiling, then closed the door, and turned inquiringly toward Harold.

"You didn't recognize the gypsy, did you, Doctor?" Harold began.

"Why, no, Harold! Of course not!"

"I thought not, sir. It isn't a real gypsy, you know. It's only Matty Hollister dressed up."

"Why — you don't tell me!" gasped the surprised Headmaster, and there was a distinct note of relief in his tone. "Matthew Hollister — a gypsy fortune teller! What does it mean, Harold?"

"It's just like this, Doctor," Harold explained. "Lute has been elected captain of the Junior baseball team, and he's so confident that he has a bunch of winners that we're afraid he'll get a hard tumble later on. We've tried to make him see some of the things that need attention, but he just won't listen. Then Matty thought of this plan for giving Lute a scare. He put on that gypsy costume left from the play last year, and made believe that he was Madam

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Zanzelini, the world-renowned seeress, who reads the future like an open book —”

Here Harold's merriment got the better of him, and he had to pause for a hearty laugh, as he recalled the incidents which his words described. The stern expression had entirely left Doctor Prune's face, and a merry twinkle played about his bright blue eyes.

“The plan worked swell, Doctor,” Harold went on, his enthusiasm making him a bit careless of his choice of words. “I steered Lute in there to-night, and right away he felt ‘the remarkable power of this gifted woman,’ just as the advertisements say. Matty warned Lute to be careful, to keep a sharp lookout for trouble, and to work hard if he expected to win.”

“Good advice, truly,” was the Headmaster's comment.

“Yes, sir! Oh, I wish you had heard it, Doctor. Matty put on a foreign accent, and sort of twisted his words around. He had Lute simply hypnotized, and I believe our captain won't be quite so sure of easy victories after this.”

“Over-confidence is a dangerous thing, Harold, especially when one is placed in a position of responsibility,” the Headmaster said thoughtfully. “If disaster does come to one who has foreseen no such

possibility, the consequences are likely to be more serious than in the case of one who has hoped for victory and worked for it, but, at the same time, has schooled himself to meet defeat bravely. While you were telling me about Luther, I recalled that masterly reply of King Ahab to the contemptuous boast of Benhadad, the Syrian: 'Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off.' Rather a good bit of advice to remember, eh, Harold?"

"Yes, sir. I'll try to think of that and repeat it to Luther in case this fortune-telling business doesn't cure him."

"I think you may look for an improvement," the Doctor observed with a smile. "Indeed, I am not at all certain that Luther is over-confident. It seemed to me that he was taking his position very seriously. I know that he is working hard for the team, and, while he may think it wise just now to scoff at the possibility of disaster, yet I believe he fully realizes the difficulties which must be overcome. Remember, Luther is a veteran player."

"Yes, sir! I remember it all right," Harold replied meekly. "Lute wouldn't let me forget it, even if I wanted to."

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“Well, we must not detain those boys across the hall any longer,” the Headmaster declared. “Do the other Beavers understand about Madam — er — the gypsy?”

“No, sir. Hollister and I are the only ones who know the secret.”

Doctor Prune thought a moment. “I don’t want it proclaimed broadcast that a gypsy fortune teller was welcomed at St. Dunstan’s,” he said finally, “but if you will explain the matter fully to Luther and the others, within a reasonable time, I shall not interrupt the program of the evening any more than I have already. Indeed, Harold, I am much relieved to hear your explanation of this affair. As the matter stands now, I have no objection to your fun. When I opened the door and entered that room across the hall, I thought — well, really, I didn’t know what to think,” and the Doctor laughed quietly at the remembrance, as he moved toward the door.

Harold followed quickly, and soon the pair had reached the consultation room of the great Madam Zanzelini.

“Harold has given me a satisfactory explanation of the presence of this — ah — fortune teller,” the Doctor announced, as he stepped into the room for

the second time that evening, "and I withdraw my objections. The — er — the gypsy has my permission to stay until the bell sounds the signal for retiring."

"You see!" exclaimed Madam Zanzelini triumphantly. "Did I not tell the young gentlemen that the mind of the grand professor was one open book before me? Did I not say that all would be right? Kind sir, I thank you!"

But Doctor Prune had retreated hastily. Perhaps he feared that the temptation to have his fortune told might prove irresistible.

Luther had been sitting behind one of the benches in the classroom used by Madam Zanzelini, while Doctor Prune was receiving Harold's explanation. Curtis improved the period of waiting by having his fortune told, and was somewhat startled to hear the personal facts relating to his past, as they fell from the lips of the clever gypsy.

Both Luther and Curtis had felt a little apprehensive during the conference across the hall, and they had tried to imagine what the result would be. They had great faith in Harold's powers of persuasion, however, and believed that the gypsy could have found no better or more eloquent advocate. Although they did not know what means Harold had employed in order

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to gain such a result, Doctor Prune's announcement did not greatly surprise them.

Now that Harold had returned, Curtis and Luther joined in urging him to let the fortune teller predict his future. Harold protested laughingly, and Luther rose to add physical persuasion to his vocal entreaties. As he did so, he jarred the desk behind which he had been sitting, and a folded paper fell out. Stooping quickly, he picked it up, and glanced at it in idle curiosity. Suddenly, a change swept over his countenance, and he stared at the sheet in evident amazement for a minute. Then, quickly recovering himself, he slipped it into his pocket, and endeavored to appear unconcerned.

"I'd like to see you two fellows as soon as you're through here," he said in a tone that expressed his excitement in spite of his efforts to speak casually. "There's something I want to talk over with you."

"I'm ready now!" Harold declared. "I — er — I saw Madam Zanzelini the other day, so she'll excuse me now."

The gypsy rose and bowed a somewhat angular farewell to her young clients, and they hurried out of the door. If the truth were known, she regretted the disguise which prevented her from joining them, and

sharing in the excitement which seemed likely to follow their hasty exit.

When they were in the hall, Luther drew the folded sheet from his pocket, and passed it to Curtis.

"Did you ever see that, Curt?" he said.

Curtis stepped close to one of the clusters of lights. "Why, it's the list of signals!" he exclaimed. "This is one of the copies that I made!"

"It surely is!" Luther agreed. "Do you know who uses that desk where I was sitting?"

"I can tell you," Harold volunteered. "You high-brows don't go down there any more, but I take special math in that room three times a week. Which desk did you strike, Lute?"

"Why, let's see. It was the end row, nearest the wall, and — first, second, third, fourth — fourth from the front."

Harold nodded. "Bennett in the first, then Jackson, Crandall, and Waters in the fourth."

"Waters — the new pitcher!" Luther gasped. He began to feel as if the gypsy's prediction of disaster was finding speedy fulfilment.

Curtis shook his head dubiously. "I don't like the looks of it," he declared. "The paper couldn't have moved itself from our room to that desk where Waters

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sits. Some one has had a hand in this thing, even if he isn't directly to blame."

"Let's ask him about it!" Harold suggested eagerly.

"Oh, yes — let's!" Luther retorted scornfully. "Let's march right in and tell him that we have something out of his desk. He'll be so grateful to us. Naturally, he'll think that we make a practice of searching desks, and the next time he has anything worth more than two cents he'll take pains to lock it up."

"Now don't get peevish!" Harold responded good-humoredly. "You don't have to rush in and say, 'Here's the paper you swiped! Ha! We have you now, caught with the goods on you. Don't try to wiggle out of it!' Be diplomatic, Lute. Talk about the weather, and about the team, and just incidentally mention the fact that some signals disappeared from your room. Watch him carefully at this point, and see if he acts scared. Of course, you don't suspect any one in particular. You — er — think they just evaporated —"

"By George! That's a good scheme, Hal!" Luther cried excitedly. "You *do* get some ideas sometimes."

"Sometimes!" Harold echoed in an injured tone. "I'll let you know that all my ideas are good, Mr.

Luther Hamilton! Are you going to take back those mean remarks you handed me a few minutes ago?"

"Yes, I'll take 'em all back and put 'em in stock," Luther assured him. "Now let's hunt up Waters, and see how diplomatically we can fish for news."

After a few inquiries and some searching, they located the desired room, and were fortunate in finding Waters alone in it. Striving as best they could to make their call appear purely social, the three visitors chatted for a few minutes about matters of school life. Then conversation turned more definitely into baseball channels, and Luther was delicately leading the way toward the theme uppermost in his mind, when Waters exclaimed suddenly:

"By the way, Hamilton, I never thanked you for those baseball signals. I've studied them a lot, and, if I do get a chance to pitch, they'll be a big help to me."

Luther gasped. "Oh — ah — don't mention it!" he stammered. "You're welcome, I'm sure! You — you got them all right?"

He hoped that Waters would attribute his confusion to a modest embarrassment at being thanked for a deed of kindness which would have been forgotten by

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this time had it not been for the sensational sequel thereto.

“Oh, yes! The list is downstairs in my desk now.”

(It was not, as a matter of fact, but Waters was blissfully ignorant of the contents of Luther's coat pocket. Perhaps this was fortunate for both boys.)

“Who was it who gave you the list, Waters?” Luther asked in some perplexity. “I don't just seem to remember.”

“Why, Mr. Reynolds! The coach, you know! He said that you had made out several copies, so he gave one to me.”

“Oh, yes!” Luther responded, striving to act as if the answer recalled all the facts to his memory. “Curt and I wrote them out one afternoon.”

The same thought occurred to all three visitors at this time. The solution of the mystery lay with Mr. Reynolds, not with Waters. There was little time left before the signal for retiring would sound, so the call was concluded as quickly as possible. Then the trio hurried toward the apartment of Mr. Reynolds, and laid the facts before him.

“Well now, isn't it surprising how perfectly innocent things will get themselves mixed up into tan-

gles?" he exclaimed with a laugh. "Some of the baseball men were talking with me in the gym on that afternoon when the signals disappeared so mysteriously. Waters was mentioned by several, and it occurred to me that it might be wise to give him a list of signals to study. Accordingly, I asked our little friend, Robert Arland, who was with us, to see if he could find you, and, if he succeeded, to ask you to write out a list of signals for Waters. Rob went up to your room, and evidently found no one therein. The signals were on the table, in plain sight, so I suppose he took it for granted that you had written them out in response to a previous suggestion from me. At any rate, he brought back with him several copies of our signals, and said that you had them all ready. Of course, I supposed that you had given them to him and knew just where they were going, so I have not mentioned the matter to you. I gave a list to Waters, and the others I am keeping in a safe place, awaiting use later in the season.

"There, Captain Luther! See how your mystery evaporates when it is exposed to air. I hope all your troubles will disappear as quickly. I am glad that you did not suspect any one in particular of taking the papers with evil intentions. That might have led

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to awkward complications. After all, it is a good deal safer to suspend all uncharitable judgment in a case like this, until you have positive proof of guilt. A person with a suspicious nature sees lots of trouble that doesn't exist outside his own mind."

"Hark! There goes the signal for bed. Good night, boys, and pleasant dreams to all of you."

"I'll put that paper back in Waters's desk to-morrow, and he'll never know what a narrow escape he had," Luther said, as they hurried back toward their rooms.

Harold paused with his hand on the knob of his door. "Well, Madam Zanzelini wasn't far out of the way," he reminded them in a low tone. "She said that she heard a sound like the rushing of waters, when Lute asked her about the missing papers, and we know very well who had one of them."

Then he disappeared within the room.

CHAPTER XIV

BUFFALO PATROL ANNOUNCES A DECISION

“HAL!”

HNo answer.

“Hal, it’s time to get up!”

Still the patrol leader of the Beavers slumbered peacefully, although he showed some signs of restlessness.

Clinton Austin, his room-mate, had witnessed such attacks on previous occasions, and knew just how to treat them. Seizing a sponge which lay conveniently near, he hurried to his washstand and plunged it into the water-pitcher. Then he advanced upon the sleeper, with weapon held aloft in dripping menace. Presently, the water was dropping upon Harold’s upturned face.

Splash! splash! splash! Harold twisted and dodged in an effort to escape the deluge, at the same time murmuring sleepy protests. Splash! splash! splash! Clinton hardened his heart and kept up the shower relentlessly. Now Harold opened his eyes, gasped, held up his arm as a shield, and then rolled out of bed.

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"I'm up!" he announced with a yawn. "Ho-hum! You can turn off the rain, Clint, and bring in a little blue sky, instead. Thanks for the shower. Now I won't have to wash."

"I thought you were going to sleep all the morning," Clinton declared severely. "As it is, you've had an extra hour."

"That's so! This is Sunday, isn't it? 'Sweetly dawns the Sabbath morning on a world so full of care.' Well, if I must get dressed, I suppose I may as well put on my purple and fine linen now. Then I won't have to do any fussing after breakfast."

He began to dress, showing no evidence of haste as he proceeded, though his tongue moved faster than his hands.

"Clint," he said, after a little time, "we haven't heard anything from Jack Radcliff lately. I'd like to know how the Buffaloes are getting along, and whether those fellows still are bothering them, and when that thrilling baseball game is going to be played."

"You want to know too much, Hal," Clinton informed him. "Your thirst for knowledge is extremely touching. If only you were as thirsty when

it comes to Latin and math, you'd be a great scholar."

"Here, here, little boy! It isn't polite to tell people things that they don't want to know. Run along home now, and see if your mother doesn't want you."

"You'd better run along and get dressed," Clinton commented relentlessly.

"Yes, I will! But I was just thinking, Clint, that perhaps we can get permission to call on Jack to-day, and those fellows who've been bothering the Buffaloes. It's our duty to take some interest in them, and besides it gives us a dandy excuse for getting out."

"Maybe we can go, but if you don't make up your mind in about two seconds which shirt to put on, you won't be ready for breakfast until church time."

Harold had been critically surveying his supply of linen, but Clinton's vigorous reminder of the flight of time nerved him to action. He closed his eyes, went through the process of "counting out," then seized a shirt, and opened his eyes.

"Ah! Here's where we appear in tan with lavender stripes," he announced. "It must be a great advantage to be poor, Clint. If a fellow has only one shirt, he never has to wonder which one to put on. Just think how much mental strain he's spared."

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"Well, you could get rid of all your shirts but one, if you wanted to try the experiment," Clinton replied with a laugh. "I dare say some paint store would like to exhibit them for color specimens."

"Now you're knocking!" Harold declared reproachfully. "'Clang, clang! goes the hammer on the anvil.' Never mind! When I've had my coat off, I've been taken for the Aurora Borealis more than once, and that's more than you can say."

"Oh, I could say it, too, if I wanted to," Clinton protested, "but I won't. There goes the breakfast bell. They waited for you as long as they could. I suppose you'll be down as soon as you get through fussing."

"Yes. I'll be there in all my glory before you finish your oatmeal. Don't wait for me."

Harold could move very rapidly when there was occasion for so doing, and the thought of a meal waiting for him in the dining-hall below evidently stimulated his activity, for he soon joined the others at Mr. Bruce's table.

It was a bright, sunny day, with just a suggestion in the air of the balmy days of spring a few weeks ahead. No wonder, then, that Harold and his fellow-Beavers felt a restless desire to be out-of-doors as

much of the time as the simple routine of a Sunday at St. Dunstan's permitted.

In the afternoon, they were granted the privilege of calling upon Patrol Leader Radcliff, and a little before three o'clock, the entire group of Beavers started toward the city.

"This weather makes a fellow feel like getting into a good game of baseball," Luther remarked, going through the motions of delivering a curve that would have startled the most experienced of batsmen.

"It certainly does," Curtis agreed, with equal enthusiasm. "If we have that game between the scouts and those fellows who've been bothering the Buffaloes, it'll probably be as exciting as any we've ever played."

"I hope we lick 'em out of their boots," Paul Eaton declared. "That'll convince 'em maybe that scouts are made of something besides lollipops and charlotte russe."

"Right-o!" Harold exclaimed. "When we have a training-table, we'll let Paul suggest the bill of fare."

"You remember that piece of cardboard I had," Clinton remarked presently, following an animated discussion of the ideal menu for a training-table.

"The one that came out of the tramp's pocket, I mean."

"Oh, yes! We remember it well!" Hollister assured him. "Haven't you returned that yet? I'm surprised, Clint! The poor fellow may be suffering for it."

"I'll give it back when I see him," Clinton promised. "I still have it in my trunk."

"Better hang on to it, Clint," Wally advised. "It may be a diagram showing the location of Captain Kidd's treasure."

"What I started to say was this," Clinton persisted. "When Jack Radcliff saw that drawing, he seemed to take a great interest in it. He even went so far as to copy it carefully. Why do you suppose he was so worked up over it?"

"Perhaps he thought it was a sketch by one of the great artists — Leonardo da Vinci, or Michael Angelo, or some of those fellows," Wally suggested. "Probably he's fond of art, and copied it so as to have the drawing near him all the time."

"You'd better make one more suggestion, and then give up," Clinton retorted scornfully. "You remember what Jack said about the disappearance of the pennant. They kept it in a certain room down at the club building, and had a special place reserved

for it. All at once, it vanished. They don't know just when it went or who took it. I've been thinking that perhaps Jack recognized the drawing on that piece of cardboard as a diagram of the room where the pennant was kept, or perhaps a sketch of the whole floor. I've looked it over pretty carefully, and it could be either of those things."

"Wow!" Harold cried excitedly. "Now we're getting into another mystery. How could that tramp have a plan of the Dunstanburg Boys' Club building?"

"Easily enough, if somebody gave it to him," Clinton replied. "Perhaps Charlie can search his memory a little and tell us one or two things."

"Why, yes!" Charlie agreed good-naturedly. "Anything to please you. What do you want to know?"

"Were you with those two men all the time they were in Dunstanburg?"

Charlie nodded. "Yes, I was," he responded. "I was looking for a chance to get away from them, but they stuck right to me, so there was nothing doing in that line, as far as I was concerned."

"Did you hear them say anything about the Dunstanburg Boys' Club or the pennant?"

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"Not a word."

"Did any one from the city talk with them before we appeared on the scene?"

"No. I should have seen any one who came, and I'm positive that no one was near us."

Clinton remained silent a moment, and the others awaited the renewal of the cross-examination with considerable interest.

"I'm afraid my explanation won't do," he admitted finally. "If the tramp didn't use the diagram before he fell into our hands, it certainly wasn't any help to him afterward. Evidently, he didn't go after the pennant while Charlie was with him, and —"

"Save your brain, Clint!" Harold interrupted. "You don't need to tie it up into any more kinks, for Jack Radcliff is coming toward us with his sails all set, and Donald Watson, his chum, is with him."

Sure enough, the patrol leader of the Buffaloes was waving a greeting from a position about a hundred yards distant, and soon he had joined his friends of Beaver Patrol.

"I'm mighty glad to meet you fellows," he declared. "I was coming out to see you to-day."

"Come ahead!" Harold urged. "We were on our way to see you."

"Come ahead!" laughed Jack.

"Let's compromise the matter by doing neither," Hollister suggested. "We might take a walk, all together, and do our visiting on the way."

"That's a good idea," Jack responded. "I guess you fellows all know my chum, Donald Watson."

His guess proved entirely correct in this case, and soon the group was engaged in earnest and animated conversation.

"I have something important to tell you Beavers," Jack said presently. "That's the reason Don and I were coming out to see you this afternoon. Where do you suppose our Buffalo pennant is now?"

"Floating from the North Pole?" Hollister suggested.

"No, nor from the South Pole, either. It's back in its old place at the club building."

"If it hasn't been swiped again," Don amended.

"You don't say!" Luther exclaimed, and Harold added quickly:

"How did it get there?"

"That's what we'd like to know," Don replied.

"Yes," Jack added, "there is as much mystery about the return of the pennant as there was about its disappearance. We went up to our patrol room

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last night to hold a meeting, and there stood the pennant in its old place. The door is always kept locked, you know. That's the funny part of it. Only our scoutmaster, Mr. Brooks, and the janitor have keys to the door. Whoever put the pennant back must have flown through the keyhole."

"Maybe the janitor brought it back to its moorings."

"He says not, and it doesn't seem at all likely that he did, because he's as steady as the meeting house, and just about the last man to have a hand in any fun or mischief."

"I suppose we won't have that game with those fellows," Curtis observed, and there was a trace of disappointment in his tone.

"Oh, yes! We'll play the game just the same!" Jack assured him. "That is, we will unless those fellows change their minds."

"But I thought the game was to settle the ownership of the pennant," Hollister said in a puzzled tone.

"I ought to have told you fellows about it before," Jack apologized, "but I've been so rushed with one thing and another that I didn't get to it. We decided to turn down their offer."

"You did!" the Beavers exclaimed in chorus; and

surprise, disappointment, and approval mingled in the several tones.

Jack nodded. "I told our fellows what Mr. Bruce said, and about the way Clinton sized up the situation, and we talked a good deal about it. At first, we were going to draw up a list of conditions, and agree to play them if they'd swallow our terms. There was one thing, though, that made us change our minds.

"Up in our patrol headquarters, we have a framed card hanging on the wall. It reminds us that 'A scout's honor is to be trusted.' Every time we looked at that card, we felt uncomfortable. It seemed as if we were taking a downward step, just as Clinton said, in meeting those fellows in the way they wanted us to. At last, we decided to turn them down."

"Good for you!" Clinton exclaimed heartily. "I was hoping you'd do that."

"Yes, we sent them a letter, saying that we would hold no further communication with them until our pennant was returned."

"Ah! Just like that!" Hollister laughed. "Some folks can be dignified, all right."

"Oh, we were so dignified that an iceberg would have been a sizzling furnace by contrast," Don assured him. "We'll show you a copy of the letter

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some time. Our scoutmaster, Mr. Brooks, wrote it, and he used to be a teacher in the high school, you know, so he could make it good and stiff."

"We haven't felt the least bit sorry," Jack added. "In fact, I believe there always would have been a mean sort of feeling wandering around inside of us if we'd accepted the challenge of those fellows."

"At any rate, they sent back an answer saying that they would like to play a game with us, just for the fun of the thing, and that they would try to get our pennant and turn it over to us."

"Well, wouldn't that bump you?" Hollister exclaimed. "Why, what's come over those fellows? Next thing you know, they'll invite you to attend a meeting of their missionary society, and join them in making patchwork quilts for the heathen."

"Something has stirred them up," Don remarked. "I never saw such a change."

"If it's any kind of medicine, try to get the prescription," Harold said eagerly. "We know some fellows who need a good, strong dose."

Jack laughed and shook his head. "It beats me," he acknowledged. "Right up to the time our pennant was taken, this bunch was as mean as anything. After that, they just came around now and then to

bother us. All at once, they quit. Then they began to work for peace. Now they seem to be as gentle as turtle doves."

"'Tis conscience!" Harold declared, striving to speak solemnly in a *basso profundo* tone. "Conscience, that inward monitor! This teaches you, my children, how remorse sooner or later overtakes evil-doers."

"Piffle!" Hollister scoffed. "They're trying to fool you, Jack. You've heard about the calm that comes before a storm — well, just take warning."

Jack shrugged his shoulders. "It does seem too good to be true," he admitted. "I'm sure we haven't done anything to make 'em change their tactics."

"Maybe the answer to the puzzle is marked on that piece of cardboard Clint has," Wally suggested. "The one that was in the tramp's pocket, you know. We can't seem to understand just what the drawing does mean."

"When I saw it," Jack informed them, "I thought it might be a diagram of the floor where we have our patrol headquarters. That's the reason I took a copy of it. You know how the sketch is divided into a lot of squares that could be rooms. Well, that's just the way the rooms are arranged on the

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top floor of our club building, and there's a mark on one of the squares on the card — remember? That corresponds exactly to the location of our pennant."

"Well now, isn't that a funny thing?" Harold exclaimed. "Of course, the tramp couldn't have used the card, because Charlie was with him right up to the time our fellows tackled him. After that, Clint had the card."

"There are a great many strange things in the world," Curtis sighed, and then he told the visiting Buffaloes about the very natural manner in which the disappearance of the baseball signals had been accounted for.

"When are we going to have the great game with those fellows?" Luther wanted to know, when Curtis's explanations had been fully discussed.

"Just as soon as the weather gets settled. Perhaps about the end of March."

"Make it after the Easter holidays if you can, Jack," Curtis observed. "We'll be in fine condition then."

"All right, I'll remember! I'm anxious to see what'll develop at that game. Perhaps we can get a line on the thing that's made those fellows 'right-about-face' in their tactics."

"I'd like to know," Harold announced eagerly. "I hope we can find out."

"You probably will," Clinton remarked drily. "If there's any possible way of getting the information, our worthy patrol leader will find it."

Harold looked at him with deep suspicion. "Was that a compliment or a savage knock?" he wanted to know, but Clinton refused to commit himself on this point.

There was considerable further discussion of these matters which so vitally interested the two patrols, but no theory was advanced which furnished an entirely satisfactory explanation. The best they could do was to await developments — those revelations which so often come with the passing of time. Hence, they waited!

During this interval, however, an important event occurred, which vitally affected that member of Beaver Patrol who had most recently been admitted to the fellowship of this group. Of this matter, the next chapter will speak.

CHAPTER XV

CHARLIE EASTON LOSES A LETTER

“**W**HAT has happened to the other Siamese twin, Paul?” Wally asked with a laugh, as he accepted Paul’s invitation to take a walk on a bright, mild afternoon previous to the Easter holidays.

“Who? Charlie? Oh, I don’t want him along to-day.”

“You don’t mean to say that you two have dissolved partnership!”

“Oh, no! Nothing like that! We’re just as chummy as ever, and are likely to be more so before we are less so.”

“Just so! So-so!”

“Now, Wally, don’t start making fun of this thing, because I’m all worked up over it. I just felt as if I couldn’t stand it any longer. I had to talk to some one or explode, and you’ve stood by me ever since I got into that scrape up at camp last summer, so I thought you’d help me now.”

When Charlie Easton was enrolled on the St.

Dunstan records, an immediate friendship developed between Paul Eaton and himself. While, in a general way, he was friendly with all the students, and especially with the Beavers, he reserved for Paul that degree of intimacy which distinguishes one particular friend from all others whom a boy or man may be fortunate enough to possess. Ever since the first days of their acquaintance, these boys had been loyal chums, and generally, when one was seen, the other was not far distant.

“Why, certainly, Paul! I’m always willing to throw out the life-line, especially to a brother-scout. What can I do to help you?”

“It’s about Charlie, Wallie. You know, we’ve been chummy ever since he came here. Somehow, I seemed to take to him right away, and yet I believe he liked me, too. Don’t you think so, Wally?”

“It certainly looked that way, Paul, which just proves again that there’s no accounting for tastes.”

“Hey! Stop your knocking! I don’t think there was anything strange about it. It was — er — affinity, I guess.”

“Oh, yes! You get those things by the dozen. I’ll tell you what it is, Paul, and this is a solemn fact. You and Charlie Easton have been together so much

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lately that you're growing to look like each other, and the longer you keep it up, I suppose the stronger the likeness will be. I don't wonder that you want to look like him, but he may not care to look like you, so for his sake, why not wear an automobile veil?"

"Do you really think we look alike, Wally?"

"I certainly do, and others have spoken of it, too. By-and-by, you'll not only act like the Siamese twins, but you'll look like 'em."

"Well, I shouldn't wonder, Wally, because I've found out that we're related."

"Is that so? Well now, isn't it odd the way things work out? How does he come into the family, Paul?"

"I'm positive he's my cousin, Wally. That's what makes me so excited, and I wanted to ask you what you'd do next if you were in my place. This is the way things have developed, so far."

"You know, my father lived in England until after he was married. He had a younger brother who was restless and wanted to come to America. My grandfather wouldn't let him come, because there was some other program all mapped out for him, but he came, anyhow. Pretty soon, the family lost sight of my

uncle. He settled here and started in business, but he didn't write home because he thought they all were down on him. I guess he thought about right, too, although my father doesn't blame him now for what he did. Ever since we've lived on this side of the ocean, we've been on the lookout for some trace of my uncle, but we heard that he wasn't using the name of Eaton, so it wasn't easy to pick up his trail anywhere.

"Of course, Charlie and I have talked sometimes about family affairs, and the more I learned of Mr. Easton, the more I believed he was my uncle with an 's' hitched onto his name. I haven't said anything to Charlie about it, but I wrote home and told them all I'd found out.

"As a result, my father went to see Charlie's father (he's still in Montreal, you know) and I've just received a letter, telling me that I was right. Charlie's father and mine are brothers, and he and I are cousins."

"That's fine, Paul!" Wally cried heartily. "I congratulate you on this addition to your family. I hope now that you'll all be happy together. If Harold were here, he'd suggest that we rise and sing, 'Blest Be the Tie That Binds.'"

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"Maybe we'll have a chance later," Paul remarked, "because we're going to have a family reunion during the Easter holidays. Charlie is to go home with me, and his father is coming over for a few days, so we'll get real well acquainted with our new relations.

"Now the thing I wanted to ask you about, Wally, is this. Charlie doesn't know a thing of all this that I've been telling you. He's been invited to go home with me for Easter, and has written to his father to ask if he can go. Do you think I ought to say anything to him about our new relationship, or had I better wait? It certainly will be a big job to hold back such important news, and to act as if nothing special had happened. I want to tell Charlie all about it, but I thought I'd ask some one before I mixed things up."

"I certainly sympathize with you, Paul, in having such knowledge and not being able to use it," Wally declared. "You've done wonders in keeping still so far — really, you have. Don't you suppose you can hold fast to the secret until you get home? You haven't much longer to wait."

"Oh, I suppose I can, but it'll be an awful job, Wally."

"I know it will, and yet I think you ought to do it.

You'll be on the safe side if you let Charlie's father do the explaining. You have a big slice of glory, anyhow, in discovering your long-lost relations. No one can take that satisfaction away from you. If you break the news to Charlie, you'll run a risk of spoiling the part that Mr. Easton—I mean, Mr. Eaton—ought to have. 'Better safe than sorry,' you know, Paul."

"I was afraid you'd want me to keep still about it. Oh, well! I've told somebody, and that's a little comfort. Anyhow, I thought myself that I'd better wait for orders before letting Charlie know how his family had suddenly become enlarged."

"Maybe you can find that I belong to the Eatons, if you keep on shaking your family tree," Wally suggested playfully.

Paul shook his head. "I'm afraid not, Wally. I'd be glad to add you to the family if I could, but I don't believe we're related." Then he laughed and added quickly: "The way we're walking now, though, I think every one would agree that you were a step farther."

In due season, the Easter holidays arrived. Paul and Charlie departed for the distant Canadian home, where the Eaton family was to be reunited after so

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many years of separation, and the secret still was in the possession of Paul and Wally. Heroic self-control had triumphed over the natural human desire to share so important a discovery with one of the parties chiefly concerned.

The Beavers scattered to their several homes for these vacation days, so the only report which reached them, telling of the important change in Charlie's affairs, was that which the cousins brought back with them when they returned to St. Dunstan's.

Of course, so startling an event called for formal recognition, so the Beavers assembled in "Number 6, June" after study-hour to greet the newly-discovered member of the Eaton family. Harold purposely arranged to have all the other Beavers present when Paul and Charlie arrived, and the cousins were greeted with a noisy demonstration of good-will.

"We have with us this evening, ladies and gentlemen, Cousin Paul and Cousin Charlie," Harold announced. "During long, weary weeks, they were cruelly separated by the letter 's.' Now, Cousin Charlie has lost this barrier. If anybody asks him if he has lost a letter, he is expected to nod his head, and reply, 'S.'"

"The thing that gets me is why Charlie didn't

hustle around and find out that Paul was related to him," Hollister remarked. "Then Paul would have had to tack an 's' onto his name. I should think it would be pleasanter for Paul to be Easton than for Charlie to be Eaton."

"That sounds like a cannibal remark," Paul retorted. "Besides, all the puns on my name —"

"You should say '*our* name,'" Luther corrected him. "Remember, Cousin Charlie is present."

"Well then, all the puns on our name have been copyrighted, so you can't use them without running an awful risk of being sued."

Then the Beavers urged the cousins to explain how the relationship had been discovered, and Paul, with Charlie's assistance, repeated the facts, substantially as they had been given to Wally before the Easter vacation.

His auditors were entirely sympathetic, although somewhat inclined to tease the cousins in a good-natured way. The Beavers were sincerely glad that their scout work on a certain wintry night had produced results so unexpectedly fortunate, and they rejoiced in the knowledge that the friendship already existing between the cousins was to be made permanent and even more intimate by the bonds of relationship.

CHAPTER XVI

THE BASEBALL SEASON

CAPTAIN LUTHER never had heard that old song, "Listen to the Gypsy's Warning." If he had, the lines might have occurred to him as he sought his room after consulting Madam Zanzelini. In spite of the skeptical spirit in which he had entered her consultation room, he felt impressed with the message that she had delivered. In spite of his professed disbelief in fortune telling, the warning of the gypsy refused to pass from his memory.

Hence, on the night when the strange advice had been given to him, the captain of St. Dunstan's junior baseball team did not fall asleep as quickly as was his habit. Translated into speech, his thoughts at this time would have shaped themselves after this fashion:

"Say! That gypsy was a wonder, all right! How did she know that I came from Chicago? And about the different schools, too. Now what the dickens did she see in my hand to tell her all those things? It

beats me! Worst of all, though, was what she said about the team — trouble, strife, confusion, a grand slam! Wow! Isn't that a pretty picture to look at?

"I don't believe it! I *won't* believe it! Still, she got the first part of her talk straight, and I suppose she's just as likely to be right all the way through. If she is on the level, maybe it's a good thing for me to know all this in advance. It'll put me on my guard. Too bad, though! Everything looked so bright, and I was counting on a good season, with a whole string of victories.

"The gypsy said I must work and lead the others. Oh, yes! I'll work all right, and so will every fellow on the team. If he doesn't, he'll hit the slide in short order. And any one who starts a row in our happy family, or tries to make trouble will find that he has to keep pretty busy dodging things. Hereafter, I'll be on the lookout.

"Maybe I have been a little over-confident, but that medicine of the gypsy's has cured me. It's a bitter dose, though! I never did like to take medicine, and this is no better than other kinds. Well, probably it'll be a hard, up-hill struggle, but I took all the responsibility of the place when I let them elect me captain, and I'm not going to back out now."

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Having so decided, Captain Luther fell asleep.

During the days that followed, he seemed just as full of enthusiasm and cheerful optimism as ever, but those who watched him most critically noticed an increased vigilance in his outlook upon matters related to the team. He seemed to be trying in advance to discover obstacles and difficulties in order that they might be overcome before they had grown troublesome. Indeed, he took his position so seriously and seemed so keenly to feel his responsibilities that Hollister's conscience troubled him more than once, as he thought of the influence upon Captain Luther which Madam Zanzelini's warning had exerted.

It was a wholesome thing for the team, though. The spirit of the captain was contagious, and each member of it caught something of his painstaking attention to details and his vigilant search for ways and means of improving the team.

Conditions were highly satisfactory when the team separated for the Easter holidays, and the alarming things predicted by Madam Zanzelini had not come to pass.

Captain Luther's first game, however, was not on St. Dunstan's schedule. In this engagement, he appeared, not to uphold the name and fame of his school,

but to prove the skill and strength of the Boy Scouts of Dunstanburg.

About a week after the boys had returned to St. Dunstan's from the places where they had spent the Easter holidays, Jack notified the Beavers that arrangements were completed for a baseball game with the ancient enemies of the Buffaloes. This was to be played on the last Saturday afternoon in April, and the scouts of Dunstanburg looked forward to the occasion with interest which increased in intensity as the days passed.

It was agreed that Luther was to pitch, with Curtis as catcher. Jack Radcliff was scheduled for first base, his chum Donald Watson for second, and Hollister for third. Theodore Randolph and Martin Hunt (of Buffalo Patrol) played short and center, respectively. Harold covered left field and Wally was right-fielder. Richard Lester, a member of the Buffaloes and a baseball player of some local repute in the old days of the Oak Street Boys' Club, was a young business man now, and his duties in the world of commerce would keep him employed until after the game commenced. He hoped to appear before many innings had been played, and it was planned to use him in case reinforcements were needed at any weak point. Jack

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Radcliff captained the Boy Scout team, and one of the Dunstanburg High School teachers consented to umpire.

This was the situation when the sun rose on a bright, mild April morning—the dawning of that day to which the Dunstanburg scouts had so eagerly looked forward. If they were restless during the early hours, perhaps it was not surprising, considering the responsibility which rested upon them.

In the early afternoon, they assembled at the building of the Dunstanburg Boys' Club and marched in a body to the field where the game was to be played. No brass band escorted them, and there was no beating of drums or shrill piping of fifes, yet the march filled each scout with enthusiasm and a determination to conquer. Then, too, the fact that they all were marching together reminded each one of his duty to the others, of his dependence upon them, and of the fact that all must work together to win.

A large group of boys from the club escorted the team to the place of combat, and there was a smaller company of St. Dunstan students in the procession. Altogether, the march of the scouts attracted considerable attention, and Dunstanburg, in the language of Jack Radcliff, “sat up and took notice.”

The opponents of the scouts met them at the field, where they were discovered in a lively season of practice. Their journey thither had not been a triumphant procession, nor were there many "rooters" to cheer them on to victory.

When the scouts appeared, practice halted and there were evidences of some confusion and embarrassment on the part of the opponents. Those who knew how matters stood between the two teams watched the scene with lively interest. This surely was a moment full of dramatic possibilities. Would the other players meet the scouts in a friendly spirit? Would the game be clean, fairly contested, and free from bitter feeling, or would there be a succession of disputes and tricky plays? If the scouts won, would the trouble be ended? What if the other players triumphed?

Questions like these were clamoring for answers in the minds of the scouts and of those spectators who were familiar with the events which had preceded the challenge.

The players drew together in a little group as the scouts approached them. Then their captain stepped forward, rather diffidently it must be confessed, and Jack advanced toward him with hand outstretched for a cordial handclasp which should bury the past

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and begin more friendly relations for the future.

The scouts fairly held their breath for an instant. Then the boy grasped Jack's hand and shook it with more than formal feeling. At this point, the irrepressible Harold raised a cheer. This quickly was caught up by his team-mates, then by the spectators, so that, in a minute, every one was shouting, waving pennants, and giving noisy demonstrations of enthusiasm. This "broke the ice," and soon the teams were mingling without a trace of bitterness or any ill-feeling.

The scouts did not know what had caused their one-time tormentors to become so peaceful, and they were sorely puzzled to account for the marked difference. There were many other things to be thought of just then, however, and it was surely a relief to know that the change had come, so they accepted it gratefully and postponed further deliberation until a more convenient time.

Soon they were ready to begin the game. Luther took his place, and a sturdy opponent faced him. These boys, perhaps, had read the "Leather-stocking" stories of J. Fenimore Cooper, for they called themselves the "Mohicans." (Luther had read these tales, too, and sincerely hoped that this game might be another instance of "The Last of the Mohicans.")



AT THIS POINT, THE IRREPRESSIBLE HAROLD RAISED A CHEER.

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Luther paused, and seemed to be studying his opponent as one examines an interesting scientific specimen.

"Come on! Play ball!" came from the spectators.

Luther's hesitation really had not been as lengthy as it had seemed to the impatient boys, though quite long enough to disturb the first Mohican on the batting list. He gripped his bat nervously, moistened his lips, then slashed wildly at a ball which went wide.

"He swings like a rusty gate," some one yelled. "Keep it up, Lute. Those fellows'll strike at anything."

That last statement proved untrue, for Mr. Mohican refused to move his bat when the next ball came across, and, as a result, had the shock of hearing a second strike called.

The next ball was too low, but he met the one following for a short fly which Wally caught easily, thus projecting himself into the limelight and winning a round of cheers.

The second Mohican managed to secure that choice variety of grounder which goes whizzing and bumping along, just beyond the reach of the nearest players and full of tantalizing surprises for any one who tries to stop it. If Mohican Number Two had been con-

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tent with the fellowship of Jack on first base, all would have been well with him. He was a daring youth, however, and, like Cæsar, his ambition proved his undoing. He reached the first bag, wheeled, and started toward second at top speed, just as Harold finally stopped the ball. A quick throw to Don Watson spoiled the runner's chances, and retired the second Mohican.

The next man was out on strikes, so the first inning was rather unfortunate for the Mohicans.

The scouts came in from the diamond in a happy and confident frame of mind, and took their places on the "players' bench." (It was formed of two planks laid across soap boxes, and was "nice and springy," Harold said.)

Jack faced the Mohican pitcher, grasping his bat firmly and striving to conceal the anxiety he felt. After two strikes had been called, he hit safely into that doubtful territory on the border-line between center and left field.

The pitcher appeared to pay no attention to him as he danced about on the base line, now taking a cautious lead, now scampering back to safety. This encouraged Jack to attempt to steal second. After Martin Hunt had one strike and one ball charged to his ac-

count, and had hit two fouls in his eagerness to advance the runner, Jack started for the next station on the line, just as the pitcher drew back his arm in his peculiar "pre-delivery" motion.

Then the tumult of the spectators was loosed. The ball went a little outside the plate, but Martin struck at it in order to help Jack's chances. He might have spared himself the exertion, as it proved later, for he went out on strikes, and the ball landed squarely in the catcher's big mitt. Without the loss of a single motion, that youth sent it speeding across to second, and Jack was out by a foot.

Of course, the scouts might have taken a sort of cold, philosophical comfort in the thought "nothing venture, nothing gain," but, somehow, the idea did not occur to them. A little feeling of disappointment crept into the ranks, and this was increased when Wally was thrown out at first.

Each team now had "sized up" the other, and the next few innings were played cautiously, with every player eager, alert, and fully conscious that a very little thing might turn the tide of victory into either channel. Safe hits were rather more plentiful after the second inning, and the scouts were more successful in bunching theirs in a way that netted runs. Still

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on their side, there was less team work than the Mohicans displayed, and this fact offset the other advantage and kept the score close.

When the fifth inning ended, the scouts had three runs and the Mohicans, one. In the sixth, the Mohicans added another. In the seventh, the scouts scored twice, while their opponents traveled no farther than the second bag. In the eighth, the Mohicans rallied gamely, and added three runs to their tally. The scouts were rather disturbed by this sudden burst of energy, and failed to hit safely in their half of this unfortunate inning (unfortunate for them, be it understood). Hence, the final inning commenced with a tie score, and Luther breathed more freely when he saw the third Mohican put out at first, with no runs credited to that team's account.

Then the scouts advanced for a final struggle. Harold hit safely, and took a cautious lead off first. Luther let four balls pass, and Harold trotted on to second, with Luther on first.

With none out, and the partizans of the scouts cheering frantically, Curtis connected with the ball, intending to drive it into right field. Alas for his fond hopes! It traveled just outside the foul line and fell harmlessly upon the grass. After that, Curtis hit

nothing more substantial than the atmosphere, and soon was shuffling back to the bench, deeply disgusted with himself.

Then Jack stepped up to the plate, allowed one ball to pass, and had the pleasure of seeing a straight, swift ball coming. He put all his strength into the swing, hit the ball squarely, and sent it speeding far away into the territory of the center fielder. That youth dashed madly toward the spot where his judgment taught him the ball would drop, then turned, and held out a gloved hand to receive it. There was just a moment of breathless silence. Down came the ball directly into his outstretched hands, but — why, what makes the scouts cheer so vociferously? It must be that something has happened.

Indeed, yes! Something did happen — just a little accident, but quite disastrous enough to suit them. The descending ball struck the fielder's glove, and slipped through his eager fingers to the ground below. By the time he had picked it up and returned it to the infield, Harold was home and the game was won.

There was a complimentary exchange of cheers before the players separated. The game had been so close that each team was entitled to take just pride in

its performance, and neither could criticise the other very severely.

Of course, the scouts were pleased because victory had perched upon their banners, and it was a happy crowd of boys that walked back toward the place where their ways separated.

"Why, Jack, I thought those fellows were your deadly enemies!" Harold exclaimed playfully. "Can't you scare up anything fiercer than that Mohican bunch? They were as gentle as cooing doves."

Jack shook his head in perplexity. "I can't make it out!" he declared. "A change certainly has come over them, but what caused it is more than I know."

"I had hoped that we might pick up something during the game," Harold observed regretfully.

"Yes, you might have picked up some of those flies better than you did," Luther remarked severely.

"Tut, tut, little boy! 'Children should be seen but not heard,'" Harold retorted. "There was so much grass in the outfield where I was that it kept me busy hunting for four-leaf clovers. Too bad! I'd almost found one when that rude Mohican sent a long fly whizzing right at me."

"I suppose we'll know all about it some day," Don Watson observed. "It seems strange, though, that

those fellows should quit their tricks all at once and hunt for an introduction to the dove of peace."

"There are many strange things in the world, children," Harold remarked condescendingly. "For instance, there is the force of gravitation. That won the game for us. It pulled Jack's fly right down to the ground, in spite of all that the brave Mohican could do. Truly, my dears, the works of Nature are marvelous. Now, all repeat these words after me:

" 'Little drops of water —' "

But the scouts could stand it no longer, and Harold was forced to seek safety in flight.

Thus was the baseball season opened, and soon the St. Dunstan teams were meeting opponents, either upon the school diamond, or upon fields more or less distant.

Luther's Juniors played well together. Harmony was preserved in the ranks and a rare combination of individual excellence and good team work was obtained by the combined efforts of coach and captain. Luther did not forget Madam Zanzelini's warning, and her words of caution kept him alert and active through-

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out the busy weeks of the baseball season. Somehow, he could not put them out of his mind.

Finally, the Juniors found themselves with but one more game to play. This was the annual contest with Dunstanburg High School which marked the climax of their work. If this game was won, the victory soothed the sting of many defeats. If the high school triumphed, the loss marred the joy of many victories. For two years, the forces of D. H. S. had been victorious, and Captain Luther was determined that this year should mark a change in local history.

Neither Luther nor Curtis was included in the group that represented the Juniors when the game commenced. Luther had persevered in his determination to be captain of the team, rather than one of its "star" players. He had consistently sought to advance the welfare of the team, rather than to accumulate personal glory. He had been unselfish to the last degree in his attitude toward baseball matters. How much all this had cost him, his friends only suspected, and even Curtis but vaguely realized. Only Luther himself knew how hard a struggle had been fought and won. It was particularly hard for him to see Harper commence this game as pitcher, while he stood on the coaching lines to play his part there

in the battle for victory. Luther almost envied Harper his opportunity, but he patted him on the back, and, with a hearty word of cheer, sent him in to pitch for St. Dunstan's.

Curtis kept near Luther, but did not venture to disturb him with thoughts that were occupying his mind. These had to find some vent, however, so Curtis beckoned to Hollister as that youth sauntered out on the field with as much apparent indifference as if this was to be merely a tiresome season of practice.

"Matty," he said in a low tone, "if you want to do something for your country, keep the fielders right up on their toes all the time. Harper's as nervous as a witch, and I don't believe he'll last more than one inning."

Hollister shrugged his shoulders. "Oh, he'll get over it!" he declared. "Once the game starts, he'll be as cool as a plate of ice-cream — I wish I had one now."

"A lot he will!" Curtis scoffed. "If a man gets beyond second, we'll have to take him out and send him to a sanitarium."

"He's done well in the other games," Hollister urged.

"Yes, but this is the big game of the season, and

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Harper feels that the whole responsibility rests on him. He's thought about it, and fretted over it until he's all worked up."

"I suppose Lute'll go in if Harper blows up," Hollister suggested.

"He may. I wanted him to pitch the whole game, but he wouldn't, although he'd rather do that than 'most anything else just now."

"Lute's all right!" Hollister declared emphatically. "St. Dunstan's never had a better captain"—he hesitated a moment, then added with a gentler accent that he rarely used—"nor a finer fellow in that position." Then he joined the others, and sought his place in the field.

Harper had little to worry him in the first inning. The high school boys refused to be puzzled by his delivery, but the fielding was perfect, and no runner was obliged to travel as far as second. Luther congratulated him when he came in from the pitcher's box, although, in his heart, he wished it had not been quite so easy for the opponents to connect with Harper's delivery.

The second inning was more trying for the youthful pitcher. With one out, a D. H. S. batter rapped out a slashing two-bagger, and his next neighbor re-

peated the performance in most disconcerting fashion, thereby netting one run for the high school. Then Harper, much to the surprise of Curtis, showed his "nerve" by striking out the next man.

In the midst of this performance, the runner went on to third. There was a close decision at the bag, but the umpire let him stay there. Harper set his lower jaw firmly and resolved to strike out the next man. He tried a straight, swift ball, and, in a second, there was a sharp crack as bat met ball, and Harper saw the sphere coming directly toward him. Almost without thinking, he stretched forth his unprotected right hand, and the ball struck it with terrific force, then dropped to the ground.

Dazed with the sudden shock and with the pain that followed the first sensation of numbness, Harper staggered backward. Then, through the mist that was rising before him, he saw the man on third dashing toward the plate. Mindful of his duty, in spite of everything, he picked up the ball, tossed it into the catcher's big glove, then fell forward in a heap on the ground.

This exhibition of pluck called forth a united burst of applause. The opponents of the gritty pitcher were just as quick as his friends to recognize the courage

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displayed, even though it had prevented a run from being credited to them, and their cheers were hearty and sincere.

The St. Dunstan boys hoped that Luther would pitch the rest of the game, and were disappointed when Waters, the new pitcher, walked out to the box to begin the third inning. Nevertheless, they cheered him and wished him well.

It will be kind to dismiss this inning with a brief review. Waters began well by striking out his first man, but then the mighty hitters crashed against the best that he could offer, and his delivery grew worse as his nervousness and alarm increased. Five high school players crossed the plate before the fielders finally stopped the slaughter, and the score was six to nothing in favor of D. H. S.

Curtis resolved to mutiny at this point. Striding over to the captain, he exclaimed heatedly, "There's no use talking, Lute! You've got to go in! It would be rank folly to let Waters pitch another inning, and we'll be licked, as sure as fate, if you don't tackle the job."

"I'd hate to take a man out, and jump right into his place," Luther responded regretfully.

"Well, you can tell him how heart-broken you are,

when the game's won," Curtis urged. "Never mind his feelings, just — Oh, here he comes now. Maybe he's going to take himself out."

With evident disappointment and chagrin, Waters approached the captain. "It's no use, Hamilton," he said sadly. "I can't hold them. I'd just be spoiling our chances altogether if I stayed in any longer. Won't you go in yourself, and see if you can't do something worth while?"

"Now, Waters, don't go to throwing stones at yourself," Luther replied, trying to speak cheerfully. "Every pitcher has his bad innings, you know —"

"You're a brick, Waters!" Curtis declared heartily. "I knew you'd think more of the team than of yourself. Where's my mask? Come ahead, Lute! There goes our third out. Just tell Blake that I'm going to catch in his place, because you and I always work together, and we're not taking any chances in such an up-hill fight."

"Say, who's running this team, anyhow?" Luther demanded, but, nevertheless, he was conscious of a feeling of relief and of exultant joy because the opportunity for which he had hoped seemed fairly to be thrust upon him.

"Never mind about the running," Curtis responded

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impatiently. "I'm all ready! Trot along, and give the first man one of your 'outs.' He missed 'em before when he was up."

Presently, a mighty shout rose from the St. Dunstan "rooters," and their drooping spirits rose with a bound. Captain Luther walked across to the pitcher's box, and Curtis, "the old reliable," was behind the bat to take his delivery.

In the fourth inning, two high school men struck out, and the third knocked a high, corkscrew foul that finally settled quite contentedly in Curtis's mitt.

The St. Dunstan boys greeted their captain by filling the bases in their half of the inning, and then Curtis vented his feelings by smiting the ball for the longest hit of the game — a home run that cleared the bases and brought him, flushed and breathless, back to the players' bench.

The score remained six to four until the seventh inning. Then the Juniors forced three runs across the plate, and led their opponents by the narrow margin of a single run.

By this time, it was known that Harper's injury was not serious. His hand had been badly strained and bruised, but these things would yield quickly to proper treatment, and he could look forward happily to

pitching in some future game during the season following.

The eighth inning was unfruitful, as far as runs were concerned, and it began to look as if the game would end with a score of seven to six, in favor of St. Dunstan's.

The high school boys were game fighters, however, and determined to struggle on until the last man was out. A safe hit, and a base on balls filled the first and second bags. Then Luther struck out a man. Another well-placed drive advanced the runners, and filled all the bases. Now the high school "rooters" were cheering wildly, and victory seemed just in sight. Luther used all the craftsmanship at his command in this critical emergency and succeeded in striking out the next man.

When the next batter faced him, he worked hard to repeat this performance. If he retired this man, it would mean certain victory for the Juniors. A long drive probably would accomplish their defeat.

The second ball pitched was located by the batter, and sent speeding far into center field. This was Hollister's territory, and Luther turned in mingled hope and fear to discover what events, tragic or otherwise, might follow.

Hollister ran forward, and thrust a gloved hand upward. Now the ball was dropping. Suddenly, Hollister leaped into the air, and was seen to clutch the ball and pull it down, thus ending its long flight.

Then Captain Luther, with a sigh of relief, turned and walked toward the gymnasium. He was blissfully happy at that moment, as he might well have been. Not only had the game been won by splendid work, after a plucky, up-hill struggle, but he, as captain, had won something of even greater importance — the regard and confidence of his team-mates.

CHAPTER XVII

“ TRAMP, TRAMP, TRAMP, THE SCOUTS ARE MARCHING ”

DURING the summer vacation which preceded the events chronicled by this story, Luther, Curtis, Harold, Clinton, Wally, and Mr. Bruce had taken a never-to-be-forgotten tramp from Boston up to the school camp in the Maine woods. They had called themselves “ The Crimson Ramblers,” and by this name they were known for several months thereafter.

The experiences of this long hike were so novel and enjoyable that the Ramblers resolved to take another, when a good opportunity presented itself. Now that they had become scouts, they were more than ever desirous of testing their practical knowledge of campcraft and scout work, so a special assembly of the Beavers was called to consider this matter.

Patrol Leader Harold Chester announced the business which had brought them together.

“ Now the first thing to do is to decide whether we want to take a hike during vacation,” he declared.

“ I thought it would be good fun to borrow Wally’s

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car and go touring," Hollister suggested. "He can furnish the gasoline, and I'll furnish the entertainment."

"Isn't he kind?" gasped Wally. "It's perfectly evident that one fellow in this room doesn't need a nerve tonic, but I won't mention any names."

"If all you Beavers had been with us last summer, when we followed the dusty highway up to Camp St. Dunstan, you wouldn't need to be told how much fun there is in a long hike," Luther declared. "I'm going to take one this summer, even if I have to go alone."

"I'll go with you," Harold volunteered.

"You haven't been asked!"

"I'll be good," Harold promised, "that is, as good as usual. How many of you fellows would like to go on a hike if Beaver Patrol had one?"

The response was hearty and unanimous. All the Crimson Ramblers enthusiastically declared their willingness to undertake another hike, and the imagination of the other three Beavers had been so stimulated by the reports of the more experienced scouts that they were eager to try such a trip.

"That's settled!" Harold announced with evident satisfaction. "Now where'll we go?"

"Why don't you walk down from Dunstanburg to New York?" Curtis inquired. "It'll give you provincials a chance to see the sights."

Fortunately for himself, Curtis had taken the precaution to dodge behind the sofa pillows immediately after offering his suggestion. In this way, he escaped a part of the forceful attack which the "provincials" made upon his outer defences.

"Order, gentlemen! We must have order!" Harold cried, seizing a hockey stick and pounding on the floor. "Hereafter, any scout who has suggestions to offer must whisper them to me, so that I can decide whether it'll be proper for him to announce them out loud. Do I hear a whisper?"

"No, that isn't a whisper," Hollister informed him. "That's just Curt trying to breathe through a sofa pillow."

"I suppose we might walk down to New York," Clinton said slowly, "but that would take all of us except Curt away from home. Now, if you walk up to Albany, just see how much more convenient it will be. Hollister can go directly west to Buffalo, and Lute can keep right on to Chicago. Wally can reach Boston by going straight toward the east, by way of the Boston and Albany. Paul can get home just

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as easily from Albany as from New York, and he'll save about a hundred and fifty miles of traveling. Charlie — where are you going, Charlie, after school closes?"

"It depends upon where my father will be at that time," Charlie responded. "He never knows from one week to the next where business will call him. He's been up in Montreal longer than he stays in most places."

"Well, if he's still there, just see how much more convenient it'll be for you to go to Montreal from Albany than from New York. The rest of you will save a good many miles by tramping up to Albany, and Hal and I will be right under our own vines and fig trees, as soon as we reach our goal."

"Where can I go?" Curtis demanded. "You told Lute, and Hollister, and Wally, and all the rest of the Beavers where they could go, but you never said a word about me. In fact, you didn't even look at me. Alas, so soon are we forgotten! What's going to become of me?"

"You can go to bed," Clinton grunted in disgust. "You think everybody who doesn't live in New York City is provincial. Why, I suppose it would be beneath your dignity to walk up to Albany, which is the

capital of the whole State, while New York City just fills up a little corner of the map."

"Oh, no! I wouldn't mind walking up to Albany," Curtis protested. "There are five ways of getting down to the busy metropolis from that quiet and peaceful hamlet, so I don't want to hold out against all the rest of the patrol. I can see how it'll be more convenient for the other scouts if we walk northward."

"Of course, whatever plans we make now will have to be approved by Mr. Bruce," Harold reminded them. "He told me to go ahead and fix things up, then let him know what we'd done."

"Well, as I understand it," Wally observed, "the plan is to leave St. Dunstan's just as soon as school closes, tramp for about a week, then scatter to our homes until the first of July. Is that right?"

"That's the idea, Wally," Clinton replied. "At least, that's the plan that Hal and I have been talking over. As far as we know now, every Beaver will be up at Camp St. Dunstan next summer, so we'll have a good many chances up there to practise scoutcraft. We thought it would be fun, though, to go off by ourselves for a little hike, and the best time for it seems to be right after school closes."

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"Mr. Bruce likes the idea," Harold added. "He says that a Crimson Rambler will never refuse to go hiking whenever he gets a good chance."

"Well, is this going to be a hike like our Crimson Rambler tramp last year?" Luther wanted to know. "We slept in hotels then, or in farmhouses, and bought our meals on the way. There was only one night when we lived out-of-doors. Are you going to follow that plan, or are we going to get our own meals, and sleep wherever night finds us?"

"That's up to the scouts," Harold responded. "We can follow either plan."

"We had all kinds of experiences last year," Wally observed with a laugh, "but nothing quite as hard as the poor traveler found, in a story I read yesterday. This man was traveling on horseback. The rain was coming down like all possessed. The roads were soft and juicy, like oatmeal gruel, and the wind was blowing great guns and little fishes. It was night, and so dark that he couldn't see his hand before him —"

"Did he want to?" Hollister inquired innocently.

"Want to what?"

"Why, did he want to see his hand before him?"

"Oh, I don't know! I was just trying to tell you how dark it was."

"Were the electric lights out of order?" Harold wanted to know.

"This was in the country. They had no electric lights."

"Well, let's see! The man rode on through the rain. He was soaked, and tired, and hungry. He hadn't passed a house for five miles. He made up his mind that if he came to one, he'd try to get accommodations for the rest of the night. After he'd gone on for about a mile, he came to a house —"

"If it was so dark that he couldn't see his hand before his face, how did he see the house?" Clinton interrupted.

"Oh — er — why, you see, he didn't! But he found it, all the same," Wally hurried on.

"He went up to the door, feeling his way along in the darkness, and knocked several times. Pretty soon, a window upstairs opened, and some one asked him what he wanted.

" 'Can I stay here all night?' he yelled.

" 'You can as far as I'm concerned,' the voice called back, and then the window slammed. So they let him stay there in front of the door until morning."

"We had some experiences that were nearly as bad as that," Curtis declared. "For instance, there was

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that farmhouse where we stopped for supper. Remember it? The mistress of the manse told us that supper was over and everything had been put away an hour ago, and comforted us by the promise of an early breakfast. I hope I'll never come any closer to starvation than I did that night."

"I suppose on this tramp, we want to get the real scout work — making our own camp as we go along, cooking our meals, and doing everything for ourselves."

"That was my idea of this hike-that-is-to-be," Hollister added. "We'll be walking toward Albany all the time, and it'll be easy enough to hop on to a train and finish the trip if we get held up by a bad storm or something of the sort."

The other Beavers seemed heartily in favor of depending upon their own resources, and of putting their scout training into practice, so this point was settled without much debate.

"Of course, we don't want to make pack-horses of ourselves," Clinton reminded them. "We'll carry a frying-pan and a coffee-pot, and maybe a few other things, but we can buy our food day by day, and then we won't have to bother with a lot of unnecessary weight."

"That's all right as long as we get enough to eat," Luther reminded him. "Of course, this isn't a Sunday School picnic, and we don't need fancy cooking, but we do want plenty of food."

"Of course! But what I meant was that we needn't carry a supply for six days. All we need when we start is enough to last through the first day. Then we can buy more when that's gone."

"Lots of fellows think the main reason for taking such a trip is to have an excuse for eating all kinds of stuff," Harold remarked. "I guess I've told you scouts about that bunch of little fellows in the prep classes that Clint and I took out last fall; haven't I?"

"Maybe you told the others," Hollister replied, "but I haven't heard the yarn. What happened, Hal?"

"Why, Bob Arland had told these fellows about the trip the Crimson Ramblers took last summer, and they were crazy to try something of the sort. Bob asked Clint and me if we'd go with them, and in one of our good-natured spells, we promised him we would.

"Well, there were six or eight of them; weren't there, Clint?"

"Eight! That's what they did, too, during most of the trip."

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“Exactly! Those fellows ate like — like — billy-goats. We were just taking a little walk of six or eight miles, swinging around in a big circle through Dunstanburg, then west over the hill road into the one that parallels the river, and so on back along the State road. Well, as soon as we struck Dunstanburg, those fellows wanted to eat. They bought some soda water and sundaes and such stuff — all right in its place, you know, but poor diet for a tramp.

“Clint and I sailed into 'em like a pair of Dutch uncles, but they all were set on enjoying the fleshpots of Egypt — all except Bob Arland. He had sense enough to know that we Crimson Ramblers had learned a few things in a tramp of nearly two hundred miles, so he stayed outside the pop-shop with Clint and me. We treated the rest of the bunch to a few scornful remarks, but, after all, it was better to let them find out a few things for themselves, so we went on.

“Pretty soon, we came to a stand where a descendant of Demosthenes was selling frankfurters and rolls. You could have sauerkraut smeared all over them, too, without extra charge, and of course these fellows jumped at the chance. Still, Clint and I kept up our heroic self-denial, and withered the feasters with sar-

castic comments, but they were hardened and were willing to take any cruel words we might fire at them, as long as we didn't use force to keep them from stuffing themselves.

"The next temptation came when we discovered an Italian count in disguise who was selling chestnuts. They surrendered without a battle, and bought some. Two or three of them had bought bags of peanuts before this.

"Finally, we pried them loose from the city, and imagined that it would be much easier along the country roads. There wasn't much improvement, though. Every time we passed an orchard where there were late apples, or some little country store where things to eat were sold, these fellows insisted on adding to their cargoes. I was afraid we'd have to carry 'em before we got back to St. Dunstan's, but we managed to walk them around the entire course. I don't believe they enjoyed it, though, and most likely, if you should ask them, they'd tell you that walking was apt to upset the stomach."

"Then they wanted to stop for a drink every time we passed a well," Clinton added. "They couldn't understand why they ought not to sample all kinds of water. It was a great experience for them — also

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for us. Both Hal and I said, 'Never again!' when we finished that trip."

"We ought to train for a long walk like that, I should think," Paul observed. "Isn't it a good deal easier to take a long hike when you're accustomed to covering five miles or so every day?"

"Yes, it is!" Luther assured him. "Last year, we took a walk of three to five miles nearly every day for several weeks before we started on our hike. Then we soaked our feet in cold salt water every night. That helped some."

"I'm going to try a new stunt this year," Wally announced. "I've heard of a good remedy for muscular stiffness, and it's perfectly harmless, so it won't kill even if it doesn't cure. Last year, you remember, we were careful to take a good rub down after we finished each day's march, but even so, we were a bit stiff sometimes on the day following."

"I remember," Luther declared. "Curt and I practiced on each other, and got enough experience to qualify as professional mass — what do you call 'em?"

"Masseurs?"

"Yes, that's it. What's your remedy, Wally?"

Wally drew out his notebook and began searching for the prescription.

"Here it is," he announced after a moment. "Two ounces of gum camphor, one ounce of powdered ammonia, and a double-handful of salt, dissolved in a quart of water."

"Do you take a drink of it every time you feel stiff?" Hollister inquired.

"Oh, no! You don't take it internally at all. You use the mixture to bathe with, and I'm told that if you rub the stiff muscles good and hard, using this preparation, they lose their soreness in short order. I'm going to have a quart put up at the druggist's, and if you Beavers will each furnish a bottle, I'll fill it for you. I think, if each scout carries a bottle of this stuff in his pocket, it may help him to keep in good condition."

"'Rah for Wally!" Harold cried joyfully. "What do you call the stuff — de Wrigglesby's Elixir?"

Wally laughed. "I didn't invent it," he protested. "I'm told that the prescription is as old as the hills."

"Well, let's experiment with it," Harold suggested excitedly. "Maybe there's millions in it, like Colonel Seller's preparation for sore eyes that Mark Twain tells about. Don't you remember 'Colonel Seller's Infallible Imperial Oriental Optic Ointment and Salvation for Sore Eyes — the Medical Wonder of the

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Age'? Now we could put this stuff up in bottles, and label it 'de Wrigglesby's Exhilarating, Economical, Effectual, Extraordinary, Electric Elixir. Small bottles, twenty-five cents. Large size, containing two and a half times the quantity, fifty cents. Free coupons with each bottle, which entitle the holder to plush-covered albums and beautiful pictures in genuine gilt frames.' Why, just think of the boundless possibilities if Beaver Patrol should take hold of this thing and put it on the market. We'd all be rich beyond the dreams of avarice."

The Beavers were visibly impressed with Harold's eloquence and enthusiasm, though mirth rather than conviction seemed to have resulted from his efforts.

"We'll see whether the stuff is good for anything before we organize the Beaver Patrol Patent Medicine Corporation," Clinton declared, "and we won't build any wild hopes until later, because the disappointing part of blowing bubbles is that they burst when they begin to get beautiful."

Busy days followed this meeting, for many duties claimed the attention of the scouts before they could enter upon the pleasures of the summer vacation. Various studies must be carefully reviewed in preparation for final examinations. The athletic activities

of the spring season were "running on full time," as Luther remarked one day, after a hard session on the diamond. Then, the Beavers were reading scout literature and practicing various bits of scoutcraft in order to be fully equipped for the summer at Camp St. Dunstan, and especially for that week which they expected to spend on the road between Dunstanburg and Albany.

Perhaps it was because these weeks were so full of activity that they appeared to pass so rapidly. Whatever the cause, it seemed as if the interval between the Easter holidays and Commencement was unusually short. It was almost with a gasp of surprise that the Beavers awoke one morning to find examinations over (the Beavers all passed, which fact occasioned great rejoicing in the patrol) and the athletic program finished, as far as concerned that season. Then the festive air of commencement exercises began to pervade the life of St. Dunstan's.

This, too, with all its joy and ceremony, passed into history. Finally, the last trunk was packed, the last duty performed, and the Beavers retired to spend the last night at St. Dunstan's until the opening of the fall term should call them back.

They had scanned the skies with some anxiety dur-

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ing the evening, and had gone sorrowfully to bed, for dark clouds hung over Dunstanburg, and there was no light of moon or stars. Their start was scheduled for six o'clock on the morning following, and each Beaver was hoping ardently that the hike might have a favorable beginning under clear skies.

There were showers during the night, but the sun was shining just above the eastern horizon when the scouts awoke on the morning so long anticipated, and great was the rejoicing among the Beavers.

For the last time until fall, they gathered about the table in the dining hall for a simple but substantial breakfast. Then they assembled those things which would be needed on the hike, adjusted their packs, and turned toward the goal of their pilgrimage.

Dunstanburg was just preparing for the activities of the day as the Beavers passed through the quiet streets, and early risers stared at the scouts with considerable interest and some amusement.

Finally, they had passed through the city. Then, with light hearts and gay spirits, they turned into the highway that led northward, feeling that their hike really had begun, and under conditions almost ideal.

Harold walked a little ahead of the other Beavers, and presently they guessed his purpose in so doing.

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Swinging his staff like the baton of a drum major, he commenced to sing:

“Tramp, tramp, tramp, the scouts are marching,
Marching up to Albany.

We're the Beavers, tried and true;
We will show you what we do
As we march along the road to Albany.”

CHAPTER XVIII

AN ANCIENT FIRE ALARM

“**D**ON’T make such an awful racket, Hal,” Clinton objected. “You’ll frighten the birds.”

“Yes, you’ve pretty nearly caused an accident as it is,” Wally added with a laugh. “See that milk wagon coming toward us?”

There was a metallic jingling and rattling in the distance, which indicated the approach of a wagon laden with milk cans. The Beavers saw it and announced the fact to Wally.

“Well,” he continued, “when Hal let out that horrible combination of groans and shrieks, the horses stood right up on their hind feet, and if he hadn’t stopped when he did, most likely they’d be running away now. Then, when the milk got into Dunstanburg, it would be churned into butter.”

“Isn’t it funny?” Paul observed. “You can turn milk into butter, but you can’t turn butter into milk.”

“That’s nothing!” Harold retorted. “You can turn cows into corn, but you can’t turn corn into cows.”

The milk wagon was passing now, and the driver surveyed the Beavers with very evident interest.

"Mornin'," he cried cordially, "gettin' an early start, ain't ye?"

"Yes, but we have a long walk ahead of us," Clinton responded. "We're on our way to Albany."

The driver's lower jaw dropped, and he gasped, "Albany! Wal, I snum!" Perhaps he did.

As the Beavers passed on, they discovered that he was watching them, and until a bend in the road shut off the view, his gaze followed the merry scouts.

"Most likely he thinks we're crazy to walk eighty miles, more or less, when there are so many other ways of reaching Albany," Curtis observed, "and then I suppose we do look queer with blankets, and frying-pans, and coffee-pots, and other trimmings, gracefully draped all about our persons."

"Yes, we look like a traveling circus," Luther added. "All we need is a moth-eaten elephant. If we had one of those trade marks and a steam calliope, the people along the road would know right away what was coming."

"We might have brought a hand organ with us," Hollister remarked. "We could dress Hal up in a

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little red jacket and cap, and use him for the monkey. Think how much money we might have made."

"Yes, we would have given a performance outside this humble cottage," Wally announced, pointing ahead to a weather-scarred house. "See the children flocking out to the gate to see us go by. One — two — three — four — five — Say! I wonder if that is a family home or an orphan asylum. I wouldn't have thought so small a house could have held so many children."

Harold halted the Beavers when they reached the house, and the scouts all saluted the little folk, who watched with wondering eyes from the dooryard. Then he gave the frying-pan an elaborate flourish, and bowed low:

"The elephant is following in the rear," he announced impressively.

Then the procession moved forward.

"They'll be watching all day for the elephant, Hal," Paul said reproachfully, "and when they find out that it isn't coming, they'll lose confidence in you."

"Well, if you feel badly about it, Paul, we'll telephone back to Dunstanburg and ask 'em to send up an elephant," Harold replied consolingly. "But hist!

Methinks some one else hath discovered our approach. List to the sweet tones of yonder dog."

Before them, right in the middle of the road, a large dog was standing. He watched their approach with evident resentment, judging by his vocal efforts, and each Beaver grasped his staff a little more resolutely as the patrol drew nearer to the enemy.

"He looks like Horatius at the bridge," Hollister muttered.

Mr. Bruce and Harold, who were in the lead, advanced toward the enemy. The dog barked fiercely, adding a savage growl now and then, by way of variety.

"Here, Cal! Nice Cal!" Harold called coaxingly, but the dog refused to stir.

"Let's all yell like pirates, and rush right toward him," Hollister suggested.

The plan seemed worth trying, so the Beavers massed themselves into a solid phalanx, and rushed upon the enemy with wild cries that might have excited the envy of Comanche Indians on the war-path. This was a new experience for the dog, and he sought safety in panic-stricken flight. From a safe distance, he watched his pursuers, and, finding that they had not

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followed him, he rallied his courage, and barked bravely.

“Cal has a pleasant voice,” Harold remarked, “but it sounds much better from a distance.”

“It surely does! But say, Hal, why do you call him ‘Cal’?”

“Oh, why that’s short for Calisaya,” Harold explained. “I call him Calisaya on account of his bark.”

“Calisaya” very appropriately gave vent to a long-drawn howl at this announcement, and thereby were the feelings of the Beavers somewhat relieved.

The air of early morning was fresh and cool after the showers of the night previous, and the roads were in good condition. It was a glorious time to be out-of-doors. Birds sang cheerily in the trees; the grass, the foliage, and the roadside flowers all seemed to be rejoicing in the reviving power of the rain. In the farming district, through which they were passing, each field and cluster of buildings furnished material for interested observation — also conversation.

“I didn’t know that the fame of Beaver Patrol had traveled as far north as this,” Hollister remarked suddenly.

“How do you know it has?”

"Why, don't you see that statue over yonder, erected in honor of Patrol Leader Harold Chester?"

The Beavers eagerly followed the direction in which Hollister's staff pointed, and beheld a scarecrow guarding a plowed field in which corn had been planted.

"That's so!" Luther agreed. "It must have been a good artist who designed that. See how perfect the likeness is, and he's caught Hal's usual position, too."

"Silence in the ranks!" Harold cried sternly. "Clint, kindly take those two disrespectful scouts out and shoot them."

"Aye, aye, sir!" Clinton promptly responded.

"We appeal to the scoutmaster," Hollister announced. "He doesn't approve of violent measures."

Mr. Bruce smiled and shook his head. "Don't be too sure about that," he said warningly. "I rather think our patrol leader has cause for feeling aggrieved."

"We take it all back," Luther declared. "We didn't mean Hal, did we, Hollister?"

"Why, no! We never thought of such a thing. It must have been a — a — typographical error."

"I suppose somebody has to be the goat," Harold admitted, "so it's well that I'm good-natured. Anyhow, that scarecrow over yonder is doing something

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useful, which is more than you two merry jesters are doing by making such cruel remarks."

The Beavers continued their march until ten o'clock. By this time, the road map indicated that they had covered about twelve miles, and it was decided to rest until late afternoon, when the sun would have lost some of its power, so far as concerned this particular section of country.

A good site was discovered in the woods near a creek that flowed eastward into the Hudson, and here the first camp of the Beavers was pitched. The boys discarded their packs and took a refreshing bath in the cool water. This was followed by a brisk rub-down and a generous application of "de Wrigglesby's Elixir." Then they felt able to tramp another dozen miles, although a certain sensation of emptiness within inclined them to think more about the commissary department than about the march.

They had brought with them enough provisions for the first day, so after their bath, the scouts scattered to perform their several duties — gathering fuel, preparing and cooking the food, getting water, and the other odds and ends of work which immediately occur to all who have been similarly situated.

In due season, the meal was ready, and then the

Beavers were too busy to talk — a condition in which they rarely found themselves. They recalled some apt quotation about hunger being the best sauce to bring to a meal, and were ready to give cordial endorsement to the sentiment. The cooks acquitted themselves with credit, and the food would have been enjoyed by any one not a hopeless dyspeptic, so the hungry scouts were not speaking words of empty flattery when they expressed their keen delight with the first meal out-of-doors.

After dinner, the fire was covered with earth to prevent any possibility of damage.

“I hope you scouts will always be extra careful about putting out camp-fires,” Mr. Bruce said earnestly, while they were spreading dirt over the smoldering embers. “You know what terrible loss occurs annually on account of forest fires, and it is quite possible for a careless camping party to cause a loss of thousands of dollars’ worth of timber, because of camp-fires left when ‘almost out.’ Not only can you help along the cause of prevention and conservation by being careful yourselves, but you can use your influence to make other campers more prudent with regard to their fires.”

“It’s a shame that people can’t take the trouble to

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put out a fire properly," Luther declared. "Some folks don't seem to care what happens to property owned by any one else."

"That's true enough," Curtis agreed. "Now, take my neckties, for instance. If Lute wants to try the effect of one, he just —"

"I wasn't speaking of neckties," Luther interrupted. "I was thinking about forest fires, and the destruction of timber."

The Beavers were stretched upon their blankets, resting in indolent content.

"This is great!" Paul declared, with a long-drawn sigh of satisfaction. "I don't wonder you Crimson Ramblers are so enthusiastic about your trip last summer. I should think more people would go off on hikes like this. Now, you noticed this morning, all along the road, people stared at us as if we were loony. They couldn't seem to understand why any one should prefer to walk, when he could afford to ride."

"Yes, that is quite a popular notion," Mr. Bruce responded, "although I think it is becoming less generally held, as the years pass. Why, when we inquired directions last summer, the natives invariably told us how to reach the nearest car-line, instead of telling us which roads to follow."

"And when we informed them that we were walking from place to place, they seemed to think we ought to be exhibited in some museum," Wally added.

"That's something we haven't done yet," Harold observed, "but I don't see why we shouldn't. I believe it would be a great attraction if some museum showed Beaver Patrol along with the bearded lady, the living skeleton, the human pin-cushion, and the other freaks."

"When it comes to that, I'm going to resign," Mr. Bruce protested. "My modesty will not permit me to exhibit myself to public gaze.

"I think, though, that walking is much more popular than it used to be — long-distance walking, I mean. Of course, we have had famous pedestrians for a number of years. There is Mr. Edward Payson Weston, for instance, who has done so much to demonstrate the practical benefit of long walks. There have been walking clubs, too, in various parts of the country, and I suppose one always might have found people who were tramping from place to place just for health and pleasure. However, the revival of interest in all lines of physical culture has attracted the attention of many people to this highly beneficial form of exercise.

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“Just consider its many advantages — no apparatus, no special equipment, a chance to study Nature at close range, pleasant companionship with other like-minded people, fresh air, sunshine, moderate expense, and new vigor for both body and brain. Can you find any other form of exercise so well adapted to every one?”

“’Rah for all wise walkers!” cried Harold. “May their tribe increase.”

At four o’clock that afternoon, the Beavers resumed their march. A daily average of twelve miles would have brought them to Albany just a week from the time when they left school. They had planned to tramp on six days out of the week, resting on the third day of the pilgrimage, which would be Sunday. Storms were likely to come, however, and other delays might hinder their progress, so it was considered a wise plan to cover as many miles as possible while conditions were favorable.

“I suppose we’ll add five or six miles to our day’s march,” Curtis remarked, “then look for a good place to spend the night. I’m certainly glad the rain stopped early this morning. The signs all point to clear weather ahead, too. There’s a west wind, and it was a gray morning with a red evening coming on now in a few hours. You know, the old weather rhyme

says, 'The evening red, the morning gray, sets the traveler on his way.'"

"We're approaching civilization," Wally announced. "Just look at all the houses! There must be at least six of them."

"There are a number of small settlements clustered around this center," Mr. Bruce observed. "A ferry crosses the river at this point, and I suppose people have found it convenient to locate near this means of transportation."

The Beavers walked past the little hamlet, attracting as much attention as the advance agent of a circus with his brilliant posters, and kept steadily on their way. A short distance beyond the settlement, they noticed a small building which was closed and appeared to be deserted. A large iron ring was suspended on a pole in front of the structure, and the scouts were a little puzzled to explain its use until they reached the spot and read the faded gilt letters on a sign above the door:

VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY NUMBER I

"Three cheers for the gallant fire laddies!" Harold cried. "Fellow-scouts, you see before you the house, wherein, carefully screened from vulgar gaze, is the

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apparatus for fighting fire in this neighborhood.”

A large blacksmith's hammer lay on the ground, just below the iron ring, and Hollister picked it up.

“I wonder what would happen if I should pound a few dents in the fire alarm with this hammer,” he said, as if struggling with temptation.

“You can easily find out by reading that sign on the side of the fire-house,” Luther remarked. “‘Any person sounding this alarm, except in case of fire, is liable to arrest. Penalty:—twenty-five dollars fine or thirty days in jail, or both.’”

The Beavers were so deeply interested in the sign and the ancient fire alarm that they failed to observe a small boy who was running toward them, waving his arms excitedly.

In a moment, Harold turned and beheld the agitated youth.

“Hello! What does this fellow want?” he exclaimed, and then the others looked around to discover what had developed.

“Fire! Fire!” gasped the boy. “Ring the alarm! Quick!”

Hollister needed no urging. He smote the iron ring several times, and then he noticed that the boy was retreating.

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As Hollister paused, the small boy stopped and formed a trumpet with his hands.

“Now run like sixty!” he yelled.

Then he proceeded to give a graphic illustration of what he meant.

CHAPTER XIX

“OH, WHERE, OH, WHERE IS THE FRYING-PAN?”

“GET after him!” Harold yelled, dashing in pursuit.

The boy saw the scouts rushing toward him, and put forth his best efforts to escape. He had started toward the little settlement, but now he suddenly changed his course, left the road, and turned into a near-by field. As soon as he had scrambled over the fence, he began running in a direction at right angles to the road. The Beavers made haste to follow.

“Be careful where you go,” Mr. Bruce called to them. “Look out for swamps!”

The scoutmaster had noticed that the ground was low, and feared that the boy, in order to escape, might lead them into a swampy place through which he could pass along some familiar path, but which would effectually halt his pursuers.

The Beavers heeded the caution, although they did not propose to let the boy escape because of timid reluctance to encounter peril. Hence, they ran at top

speed, although taking notice of the ground before them as far as was possible under the circumstances.

If the scouts had been in track suits, or otherwise equipped for racing, they might have overtaken the boy without difficulty. However, they were burdened with blanket rolls, haversacks, and other weighty handicaps, so it was as much as they could do to keep the boy from drawing further away from them. While they were pursuing their quarry across the field and failing to gain a yard on him in spite of persistent efforts, Wally felt that the time had come to adopt heroic measures.

Without halting, he drew his blanket roll and other articles of luggage up over his head, and dropped them on the ground. Then, freed from all this weight, he dashed forward at top speed, gaining on the boy at every stride.

Beyond the field was a heavily-wooded area, and Wally was anxious to capture the boy before he reached the shelter of the woods. Once in among the trees, he might conceal himself until a good opportunity to escape was presented, thus eluding the Beavers.

The boy seemed to be tiring as he approached the farther boundary of the field. His steps faltered; his

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breath came in gasps; but still he struggled onward, though Wally was gaining rapidly now.

Just at the edge of the woods, Wally overtook the fugitive. The boy stumbled, as Wally's hand fell on his shoulder, and together the pursuer and the pursued fell against a prostrate log. Here they lay, striving to recover breath, until the other Beavers reached the spot.

It was some time before any one spoke. No one had enough breath for extended conversation, and then, too, embarrassment contributed to the causes for silence. Now that they had captured the boy, the Beavers had no idea what they were going to do with him, nor how they could retire with grace and dignity from the peculiar situation in which they found themselves — hence their embarrassment.

A disinterested observer might have found the tableau amusing. Here were eight boys and a man, all dressed in scout costume, grouped in a menacing attitude around a small and badly frightened boy, whose love of fun and poorly balanced sense of humor had brought disaster upon him. The Beavers looked at the captive, at one another, at Mr. Bruce, and at the works of Nature which surrounded them. Still no one spoke. At last, Beaver Patrol had reached a prob-



BEAVER PATROL HAD REACHED A PROBLEM WHICH HELD ITS MEMBERS SPEECHLESS WITH PERPLEXITY.—*Page 300.*

lem which held its members speechless with perplexity.

Harold, in his impulsive way, sometimes broke things, so it was natural that, at a time like this, he should break the silence.

"Well, now that we have arrived, and the trembling captive stands before us, what are we going to do about it?" he asked, looking from one scout to another.

"The first thing to do is to execute the captive," Hollister replied solemnly. Then, slowly and impressively, he drew a large knife from his pocket, opened the longest blade, and proceeded to sharpen it on the sole of his shoe.

"'Tis well spoken!" Luther added. "Let us bind the wretched captive in Morocco. Who has any to spare for this purpose?"

"Sorry, but we're all out of Morocco," Curtis responded. "Won't calf do? There's a calf over in yonder field. We might bind the terrified captive in full calf, and then take him back to welcome the gallant fire laddies when they assemble. I think they would give him a warm reception."

"Aw, let me go," pleaded the captive. "I ain't done nothin'."

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"That is just what we have against you," Harold informed him, in tones calculated to freeze the very marrow of his bones. "If you had done nothing, you wouldn't be here, and neither would we. Do you know what happens to any one who sounds that alarm when there isn't any fire?"

The boy nodded, too frightened to speak.

"Oh, you do? Listen to that, fellow-scouts! This worm of the dust knows what happens when any one sounds a false alarm, and yet he wanted to see us get stung for the penalty. Ha! what think ye? Does he deserve to perish?"

"Let him perish!" chorused the Beavers in a mournful chant.

"The die is cast!" Harold continued solemnly. "Let the Exalted Furnace Tender heat the fiery furnace, and let the instruments of torture be given into our hands."

"It shall be done," Hollister responded. "Let us also bring forth All Butt, the Royal Goat, so that on him the captive may ride to his doom."

By this time, the boy was in tears. The paralysis of fear was upon him, and panic held him in its grip. He knew not what terrible fate was about to overtake him, and this uncertainty added to his keen distress. Im-

agination magnified the menace of the situation, until he was fully persuaded that he had fallen into the hands of inhuman monsters who knew no pity, and from whom it was useless to expect mercy.

Now the Beavers, without exception, were kind-hearted boys. None of them would give his aid or even his moral support to anything like bullying. Moreover, the captive had shown a mean disposition to get the scouts into trouble for mischief of which he was guilty. He had been deceitful and untruthful. Perhaps a little wholesome discipline might prove a good thing for him. Hence, Mr. Bruce left the matter entirely in the hands of the boys. He seated himself on a flat rock, and strove to look solemn, in spite of a strong temptation to laugh, while the scouts carried forward the delicate work of frightening the boy into habits of righteousness.

"Bring hither the Dignified Dilapidated Dishpan," Harold commanded. "Let the captive's tears be collected that they may refresh yon heat-parched road."

"Your Royal Muchness, the fiery furnace awaits the captive," Hollister reported, as he returned from a point in the woods several rods distant, whither he apparently had gone to seek All Butt, the Royal Goat.

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“That is well! Scout de Wrigglesby, the Celebrated Captive Chaser, will escort the prisoner to the furnace room. Other scouts will form a procession behind him. Let our Imperial Royal Hat Band play an appropriate tune, so that the wailing and grievous lamentation of the captive may not be heard all over the county.”

The boy renewed his clamorous appeals for mercy, and struggled valiantly to escape from his captors.

Harold believed that the prisoner now had been frightened sufficiently to make him an attentive listener to such words of serious caution as might be addressed to him. Then, too, it was past five o'clock, and soon the scouts would have to seek a place in which to eat supper and spend the night. Consequently, he decided to end the inquisition.

“Look here, you fellow,” he said sternly, “you can stop crying and quit yelling now, because I want to say something to you. We were walking along that road by the fire-house quietly and peacefully. We hadn't done harm to you nor to any one else. We like fun just as well as you do, and we might have banged that iron-ring-fire-alarm and then sneaked off to watch developments from a safe distance. No one was there to stop us. Most likely, you would think

that was fun. It would seem like a big joke to you. Well, we don't look at things that way.

"Suppose you were called away from some important work, just because a fire alarm rang and you'd agreed to help your neighbors fight fire on their grounds so's they would help you if fire came your way. Probably you'd be sorry to drop everything and run to the fire-house, and yet, if you helped to save some property from being burned up, you'd feel thankful for the chance of doing some one a good turn.

"Well, suppose you got to the fire-house and found that somebody had rung the alarm just because he thought it was a big joke to make you lose valuable time. Suppose you found that there wasn't any fire, but that some fellow thought it was good fun to annoy you and put you to a good deal of trouble. You'd be mad clear through, wouldn't you? And the next time you heard the fire alarm, maybe you wouldn't bother about going down, because you'd remember the false alarm and wouldn't want to be stung again.

"I don't suppose you've got brains enough to imagine how a man would feel in a position like that, but that's the way the firemen of this neighborhood feel, and all on account of you. If you wanted to be mean and play a contemptible trick on them, why

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weren't you man enough to do the work yourself and then take the consequences? No, you hadn't grit enough for that! You wanted to put us up to doing the work for you, and then you were going to sneak off and leave us to face the music. That's your way of doing business. You're a coward and a sneak!

"If we did our duty, I suppose we should march you back to the fire-house, and let the firemen settle with you. Maybe we'd help 'em, too. However, we're not going to do that. If our scoutmaster is willing, we'll let you go, but you've got to give us your name and address, and the names of two neighbors who know you. On account of your ideas of fun, we're placed in an awkward position. Any one who saw us ring the alarm, naturally will think we did it to be mean, especially as we ran away right afterward.

"Now, Beaver Patrol doesn't choose to have anything sneaking in its record, and we've got to square ourselves with the neighbors here. Perhaps we'll draw up some kind of statement that we all can sign, and then we'll send a copy to each of these people whose names you give us. We'll explain matters to them, and then our record will be clear. Is that all right, Mr. Bruce?"

"An admirable arrangement, Harold," Mr. Bruce

responded heartily, "and one entirely creditable to Beaver Patrol."

Harold drew out a memorandum book and pencil, and proceeded to write down the names which the boy gave in faltering tones.

"All right!" he exclaimed, when he had extracted all the desired information from the prisoner. "Anybody want to ask some questions or say something more?"

There was a moment of silence. Then Clinton said, "I think you've covered the ground, Hal. I don't believe anything can very well be added to what you have said."

"In that case," Harold responded, addressing the prisoner, "we'll give you until I count three to make your escape. If we catch you after that, I can't say what'll happen. Now then! One — two —"

By this time, the boy was fleeing across the field as if in mortal peril.

"He runs like a frightened rabbit," Paul commented. "Now he's looking back to see if any one is following. See him run! I'll bet he thinks he's had a narrow escape."

"Yes, I dare say we've frightened him out of several years' growth," Clinton added, as the Beavers

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stood at the edge of the woods watching the rapidly departing figure. "He won't get over this experience in a hurry. But say, Hal, where did you get your eloquence? You sailed into that fellow like a whole family of Dutch uncles. Cicero, Demosthenes, and Daniel Webster, all put together, couldn't have given him particular fits the way you did."

"No, I suppose they couldn't," Harold laughed, "but you see, those orators didn't have to wither a fellow who had made them turn in a false alarm of fire. I was disgusted with that kid, and when I get worked up, 'most always I can find language enough to relieve my feelings."

"It was partly my fault," Hollister admitted. "I ought not to have paid any attention when the kid told me to sound the alarm. But then, you see, I was itching to do it, anyhow, so when a chance really was thrust upon me, I didn't wait to be coaxed."

"Oh, well! We can't help it now," Harold replied consolingly. "I don't want to hurry you Beavers, but I suggest that we move onward before the firemen pick up our trail. They might be happier to see us than we would be to see them. Of course, we could explain how it all happened, but they don't know us, so it's just possible that they might not believe our story."

“Wait till I pick up the things I dropped out there in the field,” Wally said. “It won’t take long. Then we can slip around through the woods and get back to the road without passing the fire-house again. I’m not superstitious, you know, but I have a feeling that it might be unlucky for us to pass that place twice to-day,” and then he went out into the field to recover the things he had thrown off in order to catch the fleeing boy.

“Do you suppose that fellow gave you the right names, Hal?” Luther asked suspiciously.

“Yes. I think he was too scared to think of any false names.”

“Well, are you really going to send a statement to these people, telling them how it all happened?”

“If Mr. Bruce is willing. I think we ought to do it, just to square ourselves with these people here. We want to keep our record clean. We can draw it up in high-toned legal style, you know, and swear to it before a notary public. That’ll make it impressive. Curt can help us out on that part of the program. His father is a lawyer.

“Curt, you are hereby appointed legal adviser of Beaver Patrol.”

“Thanks! I hope I’ll never have any harder clients

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to deal with. Do you think we ought to draw up a regular declaration, Mr. Bruce, as Hal suggests?"

"I do. It seems an excellent suggestion, and a very satisfactory method of closing a somewhat annoying and embarrassing incident," Mr. Bruce replied.

"As Harold has said, we want to keep our record clean. Although perfectly innocent of any intentional wrongdoing, we nevertheless have been led into a situation that makes us appear guilty of a mean trick — one unworthy of loyal scouts. We owe it to the Boy Scouts in general, as well as to Beaver Patrol, to make such explanation as is possible. If we do this in proper legal form, I don't doubt that it will prove doubly impressive."

"And as far as that kid is concerned, there's no reason why we should shield him," Curtis added.

"No, indeed!" Mr. Bruce agreed. "We should fail in our duty if we left the way open for him to repeat such a performance. If he learns from this experience that mean actions always bring punishment, it will be a valuable lesson for him, though the process of education may prove painful."

"What's the matter with Wally?" Paul exclaimed suddenly. "He's wandering around out there as if he'd lost something."

“Let’s go out and investigate,” Hollister suggested, and they went.

“What’s lost, Wally?” Harold cried, as the Beaver approached him. “You seem to be looking for something.”

“I can’t find the frying-pan,” Wally replied. “My blanket roll is all right, and so is my haversack, but the frying-pan seems to be numbered with the slain.”

“Oh, where, oh, where is the frying-pan?” Curtis wailed. “Our housekeeping arrangements are simple, but we can’t get along without that.”

“It’s a funny thing,” Wally remarked. “I had it on a strap, you remember. It was wrapped up, and I slung it over one shoulder. Why, I’m sure I dropped it right along here somewhere.”

“I know you had it, Wally,” Paul agreed, “because I spoke of how graceful you looked with a frying-pan dangling over one shoulder. It can’t be far off. Let’s take a good look.”

They searched carefully over that section of the field, but no trace of the frying-pan could they discover.

“This is a cow pasture,” Curtis suggested. “Maybe one of the cows ate it.”

“We can manage without the frying-pan until we

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reach some place where another can be bought," Mr. Bruce declared finally. "It seems to have disappeared as completely as if the earth had swallowed it. Have you recovered everything else that belongs to you, Wally?"

"Yes, sir. Everything but the pan."

"Then I think we'd better not linger here. Let's find our way back to the road, and add a mile or two to the record of the first day."

"Yes, we'd better get out of here," Harold added. "We don't know what may happen when that kid gets back home. They may welcome him as a returning prodigal, and come out here looking for a fatted calf to kill. I think we'd better be moving."

The other Beavers cordially endorsed the sentiment, although the disappearance of the frying-pan sorely puzzled them. Had circumstances favored such a course, they would have been glad to spend a longer time searching for it, but only a few hours of daylight remained, and much had to be done before dark, so they left the field and sought the highway.

As they went, they echoed the plaintive wail of Curtis:

"Oh, where, oh, where is the frying-pan?"

CHAPTER XX

THE HIKE CONCLUDES — SO DOES THE STORY

ALAS for the cruel separations of life! Beaver Patrol never again saw the bright and shining frying-pan which had gone out from Dunstanburg with the scouts. Summer and winter passed; seedtime and harvest came in season; the modest violets blossomed in due course, and the early frost delayed not its coming. Yet the frying-pan returned not unto its lawful owners, neither did it make explanation of its absence. Though the Beavers wondered much about its fate, they never learned where it went, or why, or how, or anything that might have given them a clue to its location.

Nor were the Beavers the only ones to be surprised by the frying-pan. A dreamy-eyed, peace-loving cow wandered across the pasture soon after the scouts passed in frantic pursuit of the fleeing boy. The bovine observer watched them with mild interest, then continued on its way. Suddenly, a tug at its off hind foot signified that something unusual had happened, and the cow ran clumsily forward, trying to shake off

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the burden. It refused to be shaken off, however, so the cow, being wise and philosophical, concluded to let it stay on.

When the farmer who owned the cow and the pasture came at night to drive the cattle into the barnyard, he was surprised to see that one of his cows had a long, flat-shaped package attached to its off hind foot. Closer inspection revealed a frying-pan, neatly wrapped, on the handle of which a strap had been fastened. The cow had stepped into the loop of the strap, and had managed somehow to draw it tightly about its foot just above the hoof. After that, everywhere the cow went, the pan was sure to go — just like Mary and her little lamb.

The farmer could not imagine where the pan came from, but rejoiced in having a mysterious happening to tell the neighbors.

Meanwhile, the Beavers had made a *détour* through the fields and woods, and had reached the road again, this time at a point about a mile beyond the fire-house.

“I hope we’re out of the fire district where we turned in the alarm,” Paul remarked. “It would be dreadfully embarrassing to meet a fireman here in the road, especially if he insisted on asking questions.”

“The only thing I’m afraid of,” Wally responded

with a laugh, "is that when we grow up and really get to be men, there won't be anything new to happen to us. At the rate we've been going since we entered St. Dunstan's, we will have tackled about every kind of excitement there is by the time we get through college."

"Life always has something new, Wally," Mr. Bruce reminded him. "We have had a great variety of experiences, though, since we've been together. Perhaps it's well that we have trained ourselves to be prepared for whatever may come. This training will have a tendency to keep us calm in the midst of excitement, and to make us quick-witted in emergencies."

"Don't talk about having gone through all the excitement in the catalog, Wally," Harold protested. "Remember, we're to spend the summer at Camp St. Dunstan. What prophet will dare predict the things we'll have to tackle up there?"

"I'm not thinking of prophets," Wally retorted. "I'm thinking of losses, especially of the frying-pan. I don't see where under the sun it could have gone."

"It must have evaporated," Paul declared. "Nobody touched it, and there were no signs of it anywhere around."

"Well, this will give us a chance to show how well

we can cook without a frying-pan," Curtis suggested. "We ought to buy some eggs before we camp for the night. I think we have enough of everything else."

"How can you cook eggs without a frying-pan?" Charlie inquired.

"You grasp the egg firmly between the thumb and forefinger, and hold it over the fire," Curtis replied. "When it begins to brown, remove it from the fire, sweeten to taste, and set it aside to cool."

"That sounds like a good way," Mr. Bruce admitted, "but if a person doesn't want to take so much trouble, eggs can be boiled very nicely in a coffee-pot."

They bought a dozen eggs at each of three houses passed on the line of march, because, as Harold said:

"We want 'em for supper and breakfast, so we may as well get plenty, and then — out of three dozen, we're pretty sure to find some that don't date farther back than the Civil War."

The next thing to do was to find a good place in which to spend the night.

"We ought to get permission from the owner of the premises, before we take possession of his land," Mr. Bruce suggested. "We don't want to be arrested for trespass."

"There's a place that looks good," Clinton announced, pointing toward the west. "See, there's a wooded hill sloping toward a stream. That's as good a site as we could ask for. I wonder who owns the land."

"We've just passed a house, and there's another ahead of us," Luther observed. "Let's ask at the place we're coming to. They don't seem to keep a dog."

When they reached the small, trim-looking house, Harold and Clinton walked up to the front door, and knocked. Some one drew aside the muslin curtain at an open window near by, and looked out.

"Good evening, ma'am," Clinton began politely. "We're a patrol of Boy Scouts walking up to Albany from Dunstanburg. We'd like to camp in your woods to-night, if you don't mind."

The mistress of the manse smiled pleasantly.

"Why, I don't know as you'll do any harm," she began, and then a sharp voice cried out:

"Mercy sakes alive! Lydia Simmons, what are you thinking of to let a whole raft of boys into our woodlot? Like's not there won't be a tree there by morning."

"Now, Abigail," Miss Lydia remonstrated, "you

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know that we mustn't be forgetful to entertain strangers."

"Humph! That may all be, but boys are different," Miss Abigail retorted. With this contribution to higher criticism, Miss Abigail Simmons joined her sister at the window. Her hair was gray; her face was wrinkled; and she wore spectacles. The neighbors knew that she was younger than her sister, but no stranger ever would have suspected the fact.

"I assure you, ma'am, that we're quite harmless," Harold said earnestly. "Our keeper is with us, and he shuts us up in our cages after the evening performance."

Miss Lydia laughed, but the stern rigidity of Miss Abigail's countenance did not relax.

"Do you boys smoke?" she demanded.

"No, ma'am."

"Well, why do you want to plant yourselves in our wood-lot? Aren't there plenty of other places?"

"Yes, ma'am, but it's a good place to camp there on a side-hill, with water near, and we thought maybe you wouldn't mind if we stayed there all night."

"Are you going to sleep there — right out in the air, and lying on the ground?" Miss Abigail's tones expressed horror and incredulity.

"Yes, ma'am. We have rubber blankets, you see, to lay on the ground, and then we just roll ourselves in blankets and lie on them."

"Mercy sakes alive! I should think you'd catch your death of cold. I don't know what your mothers are thinking of to let you —"

"Now, Abbie, it isn't right to find fault with the way other folks are bringing up children," Miss Lydia interrupted in a pacific tone. "Half of the wood-lot is mine, and I'm going to let these boys camp on my half. They shan't touch your part if you don't want them to. What's more, as soon as we get the dishes washed, I'm going out to see the camp. I've read a lot about Boy Scouts, and I want to hear more. Why, just think, Abbie! We may never have a scout here again!"

"Indeed, I hope we may not!" Miss Abigail declared emphatically. "I'm surprised at you, Lydia! There's a man in the party, and I don't know what the neighbors will say if you go out to that camp to-night."

Miss Lydia laughed. "I know what they'll say, Abbie," she assured her scandalized sister, "but it doesn't worry me a mite. They haven't had anything new to talk about in a long time, you know."

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"It's all right, boys. You can go ahead and camp on the wood-lot if you want to. I'll trust you to take good care of everything."

"Yes, ma'am, we'll be careful. And thank you for letting us stay."

"You're welcome. May I come out after tea, and see how you scouts live when you're camping?"

"Yes, indeed, Miss Simmons," Clinton responded gallantly. "We'll be glad to see you — and your sister, too, if she cares to come."

But Miss Abigail showed no signs of modifying her stern disapproval of so radical an action on the part of a modest and eminently proper spinster of nearly three-score years.

Thus it came to pass that Beaver Patrol had a visitor on the first night spent under the clear skies and bright stars. Miss Lydia arrived before dark, and stayed until after the camp-fire was lighted. The scouts told her about their school, and related one after another of the adventures that had befallen them during months past. Miss Lydia proved a sympathetic listener, and no member of the group about the camp-fire enjoyed the evening more heartily than she.

When nine o'clock came, she declared that she must

return to the house, and the entire patrol escorted her thither. An hour later, every one on the premises was asleep — unless anxiety and shock prevented Miss Abigail from enjoying this happy condition.

In the morning, the Beavers gave another demonstration of the ease with which one may live out-of-doors, even without a frying-pan. Then they arranged the camp site in a manner which merited the praise of even the critical Miss Abigail. After this, they were ready for the day's march.

They called at the house to thank Miss Lydia for her kind hospitality, and she walked with them as far as the gate, from which point she waved a dish-towel until they were out of sight. Miss Abigail did not appear, but it is only fair to suppose that she breathed more freely when the scouts really had departed, leaving the wood-lot behind them.

The second day of the pilgrimage passed without bringing any adventure that was particularly startling. A new frying-pan was purchased and added to their equipment, and this made housekeeping a little less primitive. Without breaking any records, the Beavers, during the late afternoon of the second day, reached the town in which they had planned to spend Sunday, and here they made themselves as comfortable

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as possible while waiting for the dawn of Monday morning.

There were showers on Sunday, and the air was close and sultry, but it was cooler by night, and the moon was shining brightly when the Beavers retired.

Six o'clock on Monday morning found them marching northward. Their aim was to tramp during the cooler portions of the day, and to rest during the hours when the temperature was highest. For this reason, they chose the early morning and the late afternoon as the best times for being on the road.

The map showed a little village about ten miles north, marked Deepwater Center, and here the Beavers expected to purchase supplies for the noon meal.

After tramping for a little more than three hours, they began to look for signs of the bustling metropolis.

"Seems to me we ought to scent the Center by this time," Harold said, shading his eyes, and looking about him.

"Maybe we passed it by without noticing it," Hollister suggested. "There's a house where two men and a chimney are smoking — must be a smoke-house. I'll ask how far it is to Deepwater Center."

The scouts halted while Hollister approached the

house, but they were near enough to hear the following dialogue:

“ Good morning, sir. Can you tell me how far it is to Deepwater Center? ”

“ Want to go to Deepwater Center, do ye? ”

“ Yes, sir.”

“ Wal, I reckon ye needn’t go a rod farther. You’ve arrived.”

“ Oh, is this Deepwater Center? ”

“ All there is of it, sonny,— five houses, fourteen people, sixteen dogs, and twenty-eight hen-coops, more or less. It’s all here.”

Hollister thanked the roadside information bureau, and returned to the waiting scouts.

“ We’ve arrived! ” he announced with a sweeping gesture. “ Deepwater Center is before us, and behind, and all around.”

“ The idea of putting such a place on the map! ” Harold sputtered indignantly. “ Why, this isn’t even a spot.”

“ It’s just a freckle on the face of the earth,” Hollister chimed in. “ Wouldn’t it be exciting to live in such a place? ”

“ It might be, if we lived here,” Wally remarked, “ but what are we going to do for lunch? We haven’t

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so much as a crumb left, and I guess we all feel as if a good meal would be tasty."

"Perhaps we may find something at one of the five houses," Mr. Bruce suggested. "It won't take us very long to discover what resources Deepwater Center possesses for meeting such an emergency. Let's scatter and interview some of the fourteen people."

"But beware of the sixteen dogs," Clinton added.

Then the Beavers separated into five groups, and each party started toward one of the dwellings that helped to keep Deepwater Center on the map. Presently, four of the groups heard the sound of a dinner-horn which some one at a neighboring house was blowing. The blast was loud, harsh, and discordant; yet, when the hungry scouts remembered the significance of the call, it sounded wonderfully sweet to their ears.

The horn continued its melody — now a long blast, now a series of short toots, until finally the boys came to the conclusion that one group of scouts had made a welcome discovery, and had seized upon this method of announcing the fact to the others.

As four of the searching parties had met with absolute failure in their several searches, it did not take them long to seek the source of this violent disturbance

of Deepwater Center's usual drowsy peace. Having reached the place from whence the sound proceeded, they found welcome news awaiting them. Harold's group had discovered a thrifty housewife who had generously stocked her larder in anticipation of the visit of some men who had promised to help her husband with his crop of hay. News had just reached her that these toilers had been detained, and would not arrive in Deepwater Center until a day or two later, so she was quite willing (for a consideration) to assist the commissary department of the Beavers. Then peace and joy returned to the patrol, and the dark shadows of disappointment and apprehension were banished.

So the days passed, each bringing them nearer to Albany, and each giving the scouts some experiences that were novel, interesting, or amusing, although nothing further occurred of sufficient importance to be recorded here.

A week is not a very long period when one is well, supremely happy, and busy with affairs full of novelty and interest. Long before the Beavers grew weary of the hike, it came to a happy conclusion, and they found themselves treading city pavements again. The goal of their pilgrimage had been reached!

After their arrival in Albany, the scouts were enter-

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tained at dinner by Patrol Leader Harold Chester, and it was a merry feast. Although they were to separate almost immediately, they would be together again when the camp season opened, so there was no sadness of farewell to cast a shadow over the party.

"Well now, doesn't this remind you of school?" Hollister said with a laugh. "There's Mr. Bruce sitting up at the head of the table, and the same old crowd gathered around it."

"That's one time when Mr. Bruce sees us hard at work," Charlie added. "We may not seem to work ourselves into nervous prostration in the classroom, but in the dining hall — oh, yum, yum!"

And Mr. Bruce laughingly acknowledged the truth of this remark.

"Speaking of school reminds me of something," Hollister said, as if a sudden memory had been recalled. "I have a little souvenir here for Lute and one for Curt," and he passed each of these two Beavers a twenty-five cent piece.

"Thanks!" Luther cried in surprise. "All you fellows are witnesses that Matty gave this to me of his own free will, so I accept it with heaps of gratitude. What's it for — a reward of merit for being good?"

“That’s the money you paid me last winter for telling your fortunes.”

“Paid *you!*”

Hollister nodded. “You gave it to Madam Zanzellini, of course,” he informed them, “but that night I was the Madam.”

Luther gasped and stared in speechless amazement at Hollister.

“Well, if that isn’t just about the limit!” Curtis cried. “We certainly bit hard. Did Hal know the real state of affairs?”

“Oh, yes!” Harold confessed shamelessly. “I steered you fellows for all I was worth, and you certainly got a lot for your money.”

“That’s no idle jest!” Luther declared. “I think I had more than my money’s worth. Matty, I believe you framed up that thing on purpose to help the baseball situation. You wanted to warn me to keep my eyes open.”

“How bright of you to guess it right off the bat,” Hollister responded. “That’s just about the size of it, Lute, and I thought if I made my warning impressive it would have more effect on you.”

“I dare say you had your fun out of it — you and Hal,” Luther went on, “but it turned out to be a

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first class thing for me, and I guess the whole team owes you a vote of thanks, Matty — or perhaps our debt is to Madam Zanzelini.”

“Give it to her when you see her again,” Hollister remarked, and then he had to tell the others all about the time he had posed as a gypsy fortune teller with happy results.

Toward the close of his explanation, the maid brought in a letter which she handed to Harold.

“Here’s something from Dunstanburg,” he announced when the Beavers had ceased to discuss Madam Zanzelini. “Maybe you have heard of that place before. I think I recognize the hen-tracks as having been made by our fellow-scout, Jack Radcliff. Shall I open it?”

“Sure! Go ahead! See what he has to say!” the others urged, and Harold was very willing to follow these suggestions.

“Well, of all things!” he exclaimed, after he had completed the reading of the letter. “Here’s a whole bunch of news. In the first place, the mystery of Clint’s diagram is cleared up — that sketch, you remember, that he found in the tramp’s pocket.”

“How? What is it?” Clinton demanded eagerly.

“Why, when the Buffaloes were planning to organ-

ize their patrol, they went to Mr. Brooks, the superintendent of the Dunstanburg Boys' Club, to talk things over. The question of a room for patrol headquarters came up and bothered them quite a little. Finally, Mr. Brooks picked up the back of a pad that happened to be on his desk and sketched a diagram of the top floor of the building, showing them just how things might be arranged. Then they all went upstairs to look at the room, and Mr. Brooks dropped the sketch into his pocket and left it there.

"That night, he hung up his coat (it was sort of old, and he just wore it around the office) and noticed that it was getting shabby, so he didn't put it on again. It hung there for six months or more, with this diagram in the pocket. Then Mr. Brooks packed it up with some other old things, and sent the bundle to a society that helps poor people.

"Jack thinks the tramp got the coat from this society, and either didn't notice the sketch in the pocket, or else was too lazy to throw it away. You can explain that part of it any way you like. The Buffaloes have been digging into ancient history a little, and this is report number one."

"Number one!" Wally echoed. "I suppose that means that there's more to follow."

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"Say, Clint, is that the best you can do in the line of mystery?" Hollister demanded. "Why, that wasn't thrilling enough to keep you awake beyond the second act."

"Just wait until you hear the rest of the news," Harold continued. "Who do you think swiped the Buffaloes' pennant?"

"The Mohicans!" several of the boys ventured.

"Not exactly. It was the janitor, but they put him up to it, so it really was their fault. You know, they had a new janitor at the club building soon after the Buffaloes formed their patrol, and these Mohican fellows fooled him. One of them walked in during the evening when all hands were busy, and asked for the pennant belonging to the scouts.

"The janitor wanted to be obliging, so he unlocked the room that the scouts used, found the pennant, and turned it over to this Mohican fellow. He waited until the janitor's back was turned, then climbed down the fire-escape and hit the trail for home.

"Now, here's the funny part of the story. Just at this time, the janitor changed his boarding-place, and where should he land but with the family of this Mohican fellow. Then there was a time of joy for

Mr. Mohican. Of course, the janitor knew of the fuss that was being kicked up by the Buffaloes over the disappearance of their pennant, and he began to do missionary work in a quiet way, trying to get the snarl straightened out.

“This fellow was the ringleader of the Mohican bunch, but now, you see, he didn’t dare to lift a finger against the Buffaloes because of the things that might happen if the janitor told tales. With him on the retired list, you can see that life began to be more peaceful for the Buffaloes.”

“He didn’t give up the flag, though, and the janitor didn’t dare to push him very hard in this direction for fear his part in its disappearance might be discovered and a new janitor put into his place.

“Finally, the Mohicans agreed (this was after the Buffaloes turned down their baseball proposition) to let this man take the flag back, and put it where it always had been kept, just as soon as a good chance opened up. That’s the way the pennant got back.

“As soon as these Mohican fellows quit bothering the scouts, they began to feel lonesome. The janitor was always full of stories about the good times that the club members had, and the Mohicans wanted to get in and have a share in the fun. For a while

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their pride kept them out, and they began to change their attitude toward the Buffaloes, so's to get asked to join. You see now what their game was in changing so quickly from deadly enemies to respectful friends.

"Well, they're all in now, and are making good. Explanations have been made, the janitor wasn't fired after all, and the dove of peace is building her nest over the door."

"Why, that goes ahead of a good many fairy stories," Hollister laughed, "and it ends just as happily, even if the brave prince doesn't marry the beautiful princess, and live happily ever afterward."

There was a lively period of animated discussion, following the explanation of these things which the Beavers had found so puzzling. Presently Harold announced:

"Here's another important bit of news from Jack's letter. He and some of the Buffaloes are going to build a houseboat during vacation. They've read a magazine article, or some such thing, telling how to do it, so they're going to take a whack at it. They expect to have barrels of fun on their private yacht, and we're invited to cruise with them if we can arrange our many important personal affairs so as to

get back to Dunstanburg in time to catch the boat before it sails."

"That would be fun," Hollister declared eagerly. "Let's try to do it. I've heard a lot about the house that Jack built, and this will be the houseboat that Jack built."

It may be mentioned in passing that arrangements were duly made for several of the Beavers to cruise with a few of the Buffaloes on this remarkable boat, but this portion of history will be reserved for the next volume of this series, to be entitled, "The Houseboat That Jack Built."

Presently, Luther glanced at his watch, and said hurriedly, "Far be it from me to disturb this merry dinner party, but the trains won't wait for us, you know, and we won't have more than a comfortable margin, even if we start right away for the station."

This ended the pleasant period of discussion and retrospect, and soon the Beavers were separating at the station. Luther and Hollister started westward, and Wally departed in the opposite direction for Boston. Paul and Charlie began their journey on the train with Luther and Hollister, although it would be necessary for them to change cars and travel a long distance before reaching Paul's home near Ot-

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tawa. Mr. Bruce and Curtis made close connections with a fast express that would carry them into New York City before sunset. Thus the Beavers scattered, leaving their patrol leader and his assistant to represent them in Albany.

These two "official" Beavers were walking back toward their homes, after watching the departure of their comrades.

"Clint," Harold said suddenly, "what makes our crowd different from a lot of other fellows? We have heaps of fun. We're into all kinds of things, and yet there is a difference. I can feel it, but it's hard to put it into words."

"It's the spirit of the crowd, Hal," Clinton replied slowly. "Some scouts look at the Scout Law as a lot of rules to be learned and obeyed in a sort of stiff, formal way. In our patrol, I believe every fellow feels that this law is a set of working principles to be lived. We're obeying Scout Law by living it. I guess that's what makes the difference, Hal. Yet, you see how much fun we have. I tell you what, old man, that's the best way to be a scout."

They were turning a corner now, and Harold looked across the street at a large church which occupied the opposite corner. Near the fence, a large

bulletin board had been placed, and Harold's sharp eyes had caught a sentence printed thereupon in large type.

"There's the same thing you've been saying, Clint," he observed, "and it's put in ten words. See?"

Clinton followed the direction of his companion's gaze, and read the sentence, "'As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.'"

"That's just it, Hal," he agreed.

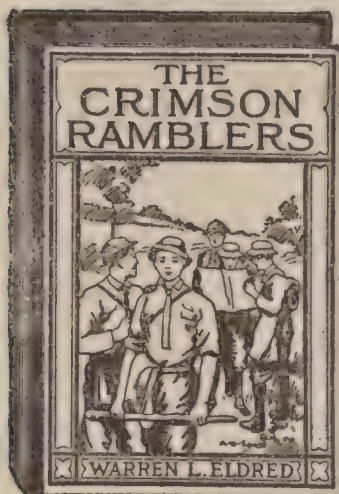
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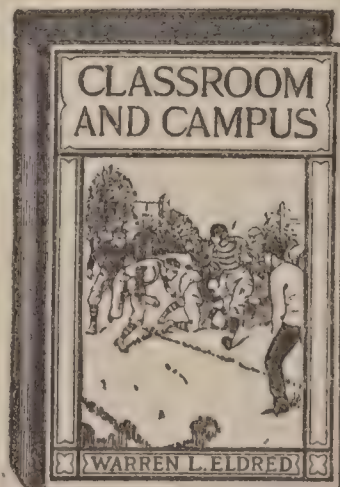
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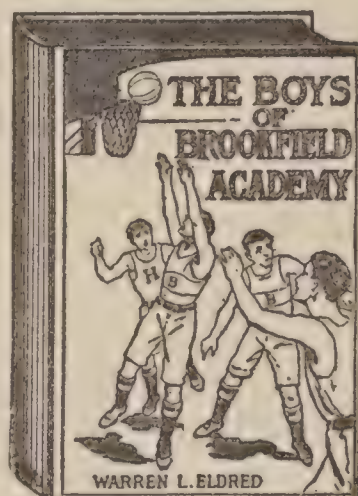
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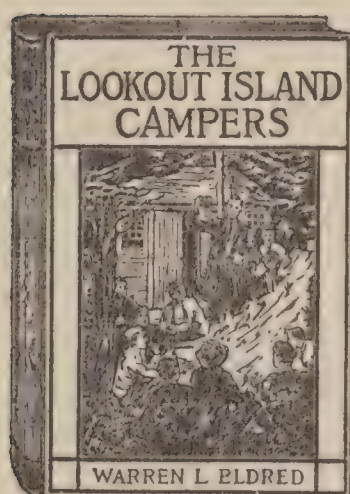
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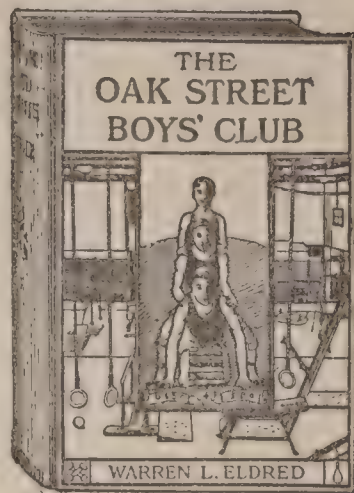
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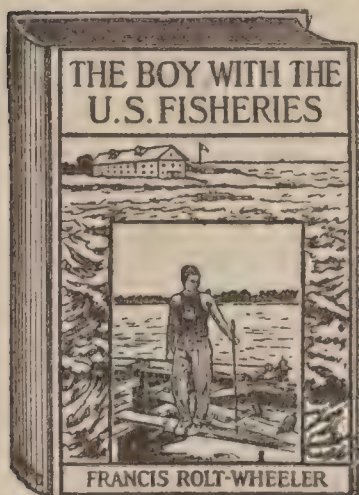
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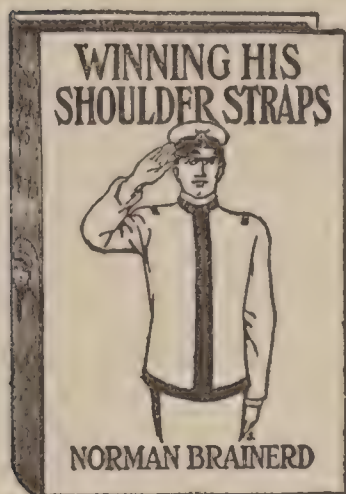
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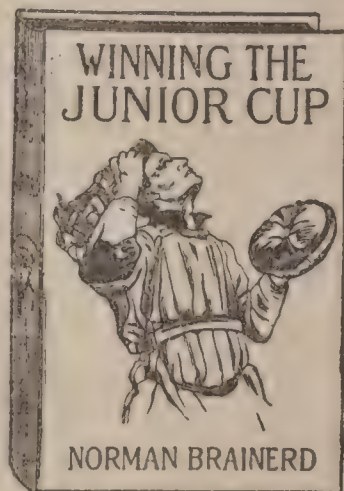
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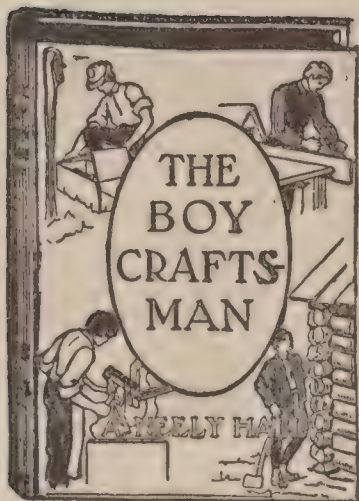
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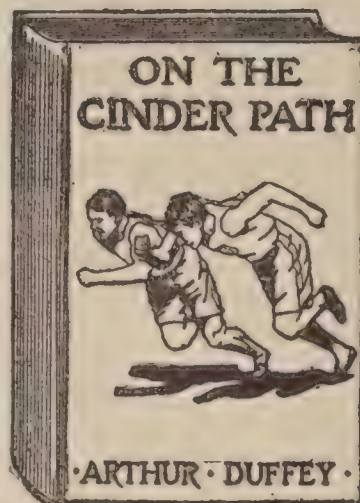
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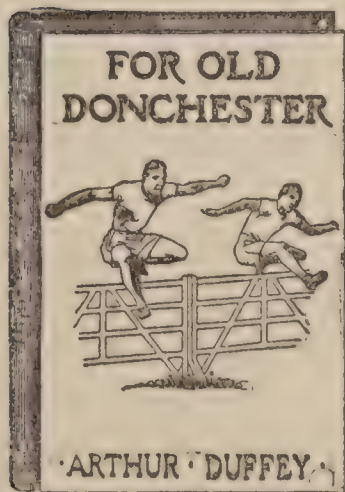
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